UNITARIAN THOUGHT

EPHRAIM EMERTON

Columbia University
in the City of New York

LIBRARY

PURCHASED FROM

THE

WILLIAM C. SCHERMERHORN

MEMORIAL FUND

UNITARIAN THOUGHT

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

UNITARIAN THOUGHT

BY

EPHRAIM EMERTON

PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1916

All rights reserved

Copyright, 1911,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published January, 1911.
Reprinted November, 1916.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

TO

FOUR UNITARIAN WOMEN

OF FOUR GENERATIONS

MY GRANDMOTHER, MY MOTHER, MY WIFE

AND MY DAUGHTER

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

PREFACE

This little book is intended for three classes of readers: first, for those to whom Unitarianism is only a name belonging to a body of Christians insignificantly small, but, rather curiously, including a remarkable proportion of men who have been distinguished in English and American life and letters; second, for those who have distinct, but unfavorable impressions of Unitarians as hostile to most of the cherished beliefs of Christians, perhaps even as wicked and dangerous persons not safely to be intrusted with important private or public duties; third, for Unitarians themselves, to remind them once again of the treasure they have received from their fathers and their obligation to see that it be not diminished. Its purpose is neither to excite controversy nor to settle it, but only to state fairly its own constructive propositions. If in so doing it suggests antagonisms, it does so only to make its own positions clear. The right to differ, the most precious right of the thinking man, which it claims for Unitarians, it recognizes in fullest measure for all honest minds.

Three friends, one a Unitarian theologian, one a Trinitarian theologian, and one a man of pure science without formulated religious opinions, have had the great kindness to read the manuscript of these pages and have approved their publication. To these and to one or two others who have shown an interest in the progress of the work, especially to my colleague, Professor William Wallace Fenn, Dean of the Harvard Divinity School, I beg to express my deepest obligations.

E. E.

Cambridge, October, 1910.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
PREFACE		vii
INTRODUCTION		1
CHAPTER I.	THE NATURE OF BELIEF	11
II.	MIRACLE	29
III.	THE NATURE OF MAN	59
IV.	THE BIBLE	110
V.	JESUS	148
VI.	REDEMPTION	176
VII.	THE CHURCH	203
VIII.	WORSHIP	229
IX.	THE FUTURE LIFE	259
X.	THE THOUGHT OF GOD	279

UNITARIAN THOUGHT

INTRODUCTION

In these days of religious ferment, when the perpetual conflicts of faith and knowledge, of tradition and experience, of authority and independence, of unity and diversity, are being revived and re-fought with increasing energy, it is the part of every community of religious men to give account to themselves anew of the faith that is in them. Only as they can do this can they properly claim the allegiance of their followers or attract inquiring minds from other sources. There is indeed abroad in the religious world as elsewhere a spirit of charity and toleration which we must heartily welcome. No one would openly and consciously invite the early zeal of persecution to work its holy mission again in our modern society. However much the persecuting spirit may still be lying latent in the hearts of men, their tongues are quick to repudiate any such charge. Everywhere we hear the persuasive cry of indifference to details, of surrender of non-esssentials, of modifying the creeds, even of reforming the ancient mechanisms of authority.

All this is well. We are united in a conviction that former times erred in too greatly emphasizing slight and temporary differences in men's thought. We are all glad to-day to believe that such unimportant distinctions are vanishing or at least losing something of their value. We look forward to seeing them diminish still more in number and in importance. But, meanwhile, it is easy to read in the signs of the time a growing impatience with all these peace-making, compromising processes. Together with the cry against over-emphasis on the unimportant there sounds also the deeper note of warning lest we forget the important. In our anxiety not to exalt the temporary we are in danger, so we are being warned, of losing sight of the permanent. For very dread of non-essentials we must not diminish in any way the really and truly essential. In a word, the conflict of our day is not so much whether we are to be sticklers for precious trifles or nobly superior to them; whether we are to reject science or accept it; whether we are to exalt the individual thinker or show him his place under the beneficent direction of authority. It is rather to determine what things *are* trifles, precious or otherwise. It is to determine the true relation between exact knowledge and a worthy faith. It is to fix, as carefully as may be, a just proportion between the freedom of the individual and the

claim of authority, under whatever form it may be disguised.

The hope of the future does not lie in banishing conflict from the world of religious thought. That end could be accomplished only in one of two ways: either by a decline into general indifference, or by subjecting all thought to the dictation of an unquestioned authority. Either of these solutions is a solution of despair. In the last analysis they work out to the same dismal result; for the blind acceptance of an authority is only another expression of personal indifference. No, the hope of the future is not in banishing conflict. It is in the clearing and sharpening of the greater antagonisms, in such a fixing of what are the real essentials, that every thinking man can recognize them and give his allegiance accordingly. In this clearing process the lesser and the fictitious antagonisms will disappear. They will be absorbed in the really great distinctions, which do not rest upon mere logical argument or upon a higher or lower culture, but upon the few fundamental ideas which have always determined, in the last resort, the attitude of religious parties. Men will learn that when they discuss whether a Christian ought to be baptized by putting water on his head or by plunging him in all over, they are wasting their time in a futile game of words, but that when they argue over again

the old question of infant or adult baptism they are dealing with a point of living, vital, and permanent interest.

As this clarifying process goes on it is to be expected that the number of possible groupings of men in religious affairs will diminish. As occurs in political life when old lines of party division have become obliterated by the growth of many new interests that do not fit into the normal scheme of working parties, — after long years of confusion, in some new crisis of the nation's life, the great, permanent issues lead again to new and more significant re-formations, — so it must be with the movement of religious thought. After the present long interval of petty sectarian strife, there must come a readjustment along the lines of real and permanent oppositions. Men will see that after all the minor compromises have been made there remain issues on which no compromise is possible. After all the non-essentials have been eliminated, there remain a few things on which men will insist as essentials, and they will insist with all the more zeal because these things are few.

It is too early as yet to be certain as to the signs of this approaching readjustment. It is customary to point to the conscious efforts at Christian unity which many spokesmen of many sects have been urging; but

it must be confessed that so far the actual results of such activity have been meagre enough, — a "union church" here and there in the country, a softening of the language of controversy, a greater readiness to co-operate in works of humanity, but not much more. Far more obvious is the attempt on the part of existing sects to define their attitude on some few burning questions in such a way as to hold the doubtful allegiance of their members, or, in extreme cases, even to force a severing of that allegiance. Recent heresy trials have been of real service in showing where the controlling powers in several of the most important American religious bodies are willing to make their stand against the rising tide of serious scientific thought. They have done more than this. They have made clear how large and respectable a fraction of the membership in all the "orthodox" sects is retained only by sacrifices of sincerity which cannot be made forever with impunity. While on the one hand they have given to the dominant powers within the sects a security they have long been lacking, they have, on the other hand, shown to the hesitating minority the nature of the sacrifices they have been making and have put before them with imperative clearness the question how long they are willing to go on making them.

It is in the hope of contributing a little to the solu-

tion of this problem in some individual minds that these pages have been written. They are an attempt to state clearly the attitude of mind in which one of the smallest of the Christian bodies that have come into existence with the Protestant Reformation stands with reference to present-day religious questions. This volume cannot in any sense of the word be regarded as an official utterance. No person connected with the administration of the Unitarian body has known of its preparation. It has been one of the boasts of Unitarianism that it has never authorized any person or any body of persons to speak for it in any formal or determinate fashion. It shares with Christianity itself the proud claim of being ever incomplete and therefore ever ready to try new aspects of truth to see whether they be in harmony with the old truths. It is only as an individual, a layman of the third generation of American Unitarians, that the author ventures to give expression to what he believes to be, on the whole, the *consensus* of Unitarians on the main topics of religious discussion.

It is probably true that there are few statements of opinion made here, to which some Unitarians would not take exception. There are certainly many statements with which many non-Unitarians would be heartily in accord. In saying, therefore, as must frequently be said, "Unitarians believe this, or that," it

is not implied that all Unitarians believe this in precisely this way, nor is it suggested that only Unitarians so believe. What is meant is that, so far as the author can judge, the aggregate of the views and states of mind here described is held by Unitarians more generally, more completely, and more frankly than by any one else. It is this general agreement that forms the excuse for being of the religious association which tries to perpetuate and to extend these views and to maintain these states of mind.

There are two criticisms of Unitarianism so frequently and so confidently made that they have come to be the commonplaces of remark whenever the word is mentioned. One of these criticisms is that Unitarianism is merely a kind of religious philosophy. The other is that it is merely a system of morals. Kindly critics are willing to add that it is a philosophy in which they find much to admire and that they are perfectly willing to live by its moral system. What they cannot admit is, that it has any claim whatever upon them as a form of religion. "Unitarianism," it has often been said, "is a very good thing to live by, but a very poor thing to die by," the implication being, we may suppose, that the crisis of physical death brings a man into some relation with God essentially different from that which he held during his earthly life. It is like the feeling of

the child who regularly omitted his morning prayer on the ground that he could take care of himself in the daytime. The Unitarian, believing as he does that he is as much bound by the law and the love of God during the daytime of life as he can be in the tender darkness of death, draws no line between the religion by which he will live and that by which he is ready to die. He needs no critic to inform him that neither philosophy nor morality makes a religion. Only, he can accept no religion which goes against a sound philosophy or which tries to be independent of an imperative morality.

A third criticism of Unitarianism is that it is a mere bundle of negatives, — that its spirit is "that which ever denies," — that it has nothing positive to offer, but must content itself with always being in the opposition. It is gently admitted that in fact it has done good service in this kind. Just as the opposition in a Parliament serves the nation by wise and continuous criticism of the power actually responsible for government, so, it is admitted, Unitarianism has put a finger on many a weak spot in the doctrine and the practice of other Christian bodies greatly to their advantage and to its own credit. With this negative praise Unitarians have been fain to be content, but it in no way expresses their own view of themselves. It is true that they have been compelled by the very nature of

the case to express themselves often in the language of negation. They have done this because it was the only way in which they could make their position clear. Their opponents had possession of the field. It was they, the opponents, who had tied themselves up in a tangle of ideas largely negations of primitive and simple Christianity; so that there was no other way of reasserting great positive truths than to deny these. The truths asserted and reasserted were none the less positive on this account. Unitarians know perfectly well that nothing can live upon negations. No organization can serve even as a refuge from others unless it can show its right to exist by offering positive and permanent principles, by which it is ready to stand or fall.

The following pages have been written with these three criticisms constantly before the author's mind. He hopes to have shown that Unitarianism is so truly a form of religion that it ought to satisfy those who make the highest demand upon the religious life. By religion the Unitarian means a recognized dependence of man upon the power greater than himself which he feels at the heart of things, animating, guiding, reconciling all by the action of a will that is neither above law nor subject to it, but is itself Law. If he stopped here, he would indeed incur the charge of being satisfied with a rather abstract philosophical scheme. He

adds to his definition the element of personal service. Toward this power he feels those sentiments of devotion, of gratitude, of duty, of dependence, which lead to rational worship on the one hand and to right dealing with his fellow-man on the other. Thus his philosophy and his morals grow rationally and essentially out of his religion. In it they find their explanation and their support. Lacking this purely religious element, philosophy would be to him a barren abstraction and morality a heartless code.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF BELIEF

How happy is he born and taught,
That serveth not another's will,
Whose armour is his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill.

— *Sir Henry Wotton.*

If there is anything peculiar in the mental attitude of Unitarians toward religious questions, it is to be found in their understanding of what constitutes belief. There is no word that we use more readily or less carefully. We say we "believe" things that vary so widely in their nature and content as to have no common ground on which belief in them can be based. We believe in our own existence; we believe the sun will rise to-morrow; we believe in virtue and in a high tariff. We believe that Napoleon invaded Russia, that Alexander was a great general, that all men were created free and equal, that Jesus turned water into wine, and so on indefinitely. If we inquire into the reasons for these several "beliefs," we discover at once that they rest upon the widest diversity of evidence. The mental process which assures us that the sun will rise to-morrow will give us no

comfort as to the certainty of our own existence, nor as to the blessings of a protective tariff. We may establish to our satisfaction the Napoleonic invasion of Russia, but the kind of evidence that satisfies us here will not convince us of the freedom and equality of all men. Belief, as we loosely employ the word, seems to rest upon an almost infinite variety of kinds of evidence having little or no relation with each other. The only thing common to them is the certainty of the conviction they bring. If the particular evidence is only strong enough, we can, for practical purposes, be just as sure of one kind of fact as of another.

We are concerned here with religious beliefs, and it is therefore of the first importance that we should be clear at the outset what we mean by belief as applied to religious matters. We are inclined to say at first thought that all belief must rest upon evidence, but it needs only a moment's observation to convince us that in fact this is not true. An immense proportion of the most cherished beliefs of mankind rest, not upon evidence, but upon a great variety of other sanctions. Chief of these is the force of tradition. We believe things because persons in whom we "believe" have taught us that they are true. By far the larger part of this teaching is impersonal and involuntary. We get such ideas, we say, by inheritance or by suggestion, and this suggestion comes

largely from the same persons from whom we may inherit our instincts. Or, we take our beliefs from the human society in which we happen to be placed. There are family beliefs, race beliefs, national beliefs, intense often in proportion to the absence of any reflection on our own part. When we begin to reflect upon or inquire into such beliefs, we almost certainly weaken their hold on our allegiance.

This is eminently true of religious beliefs. Religion in many of its most impressive forms has been a thing of traditions. It has belonged to races and nations as a part of their common possession. It was theirs, not by virtue of any personal conviction on the part of individuals that this religion was "true," but because of its divine institution certified by signs and wonders, declared by prophetic utterance, demonstrated by success in war and prosperity in peace. Not to accept it would be to declare oneself outside the racial bond within which alone a proper relation with the gods was possible. But then have come times when men began to speculate about the foundations of their religious beliefs, when traditions have no longer sufficed, and when leaders of thought have arisen to remind men that, after all, back of all racial claims there lay deep, permanent instincts of the individual man calling upon him to make clear to himself his own personal relation to the unseen world of

spirit. It is on such individual appeal that the great universal religions have based their hold upon the allegiance of mankind. They begin by challenging the claims of the existing racial systems through their bold assertion of certain principles for which they ask acceptance from individuals. With them there comes an entirely new idea into the world, — the idea of personal religious conviction. Whoever accepts their teaching must do so on the ground of some individual satisfaction he finds in it and which he does not find elsewhere. The Buddhist, the Mohammedan, and the Christian alike reject all religions but their own, because in each case the appeal is absolute. What gives it its peculiar force is precisely that it addresses itself to the individual soul. It is not possible for the true follower of a universal religion to shelter himself behind racial or national institutions. He must, especially in every moment of stress, stand out for himself from the mass of his fellow-believers and confess himself individually to the following of the principles on which the religion he professes is founded. For the Christian it was the following of the Cross.

But now, when a man stands out thus naked and alone to confess his belief in a religious system, how shall he give account to himself and to others of the belief that is in him? It must rest upon something.

It is never quite enough that he repeat the formula: "I believe." It cannot long satisfy even himself; for it lies in the very nature of a belief of conviction that it shall have some means of accounting for itself. That is what constitutes the difference between such belief and the merely accepted forms of tribal worship. True, the martyr of the Cross might go steadily to his death for the mere glory of "The Name." It was his business, not to define, but to suffer. But meanwhile, wherever the Christian message had gone, other men were elaborating its defence, giving the grounds of their adherence to it, and thus preparing the way for thousands more who might be won by their appeal. That is the Christian "Apology," the definition of what Christians in the growing period of the Church's life were willing to stand by and the declaration of the bases on which that willingness rested. It is a curious literature, singularly mingled of wide learning, glowing faith in the highest spiritual truth, childish credulity, fanatical enthusiasm, and plain common sense. The grounds upon which the writers based their faith are manifold in their variety, but they may readily be reduced to two. The appeal is made either to the support of authority or to the witness of the "Spirit." As a rule the two are hopelessly entangled in the argument, but we can generally separate them sufficiently

to make it clear to ourselves that the minds of men were working along these two lines.

Even from the very beginning this mingling of the two processes is clearly to be seen. The teaching of Jesus was accepted, not on its merits alone. It was true, because in Jesus men saw the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy, or because it was accompanied by miraculous occurrences, or because it promised relief from the miseries of life. The test of its real power came when men began to see that Jewish prophecy was not being fulfilled, that the working of natural law was not permanently to be interfered with, and that life had as many miseries as ever. Then it became evident that back of all these superficial motives there lay and had lain from the beginning a profound appeal to that other witness for which we have no other name than the witness of the Spirit. So it has been ever since. As soon as there was an accepted record of the sayings of Jesus, these were pointed to as authority. Even earlier perhaps there were writings of his first followers, that served the same purpose of appeal. Then these were repeated and commented upon, and each generation of comment added so much to the volume of evidence that could be quoted in support of the faith. Then there grew along with this body of written authority an organization of men, at first for the guidance and pro-

tection of the scattered and doubtful followers of the Master, but soon also for their government. The interpretation of the written and oral tradition passed into the hands of this organization, and when this had been done there was henceforth a visible and tangible human authority to which appeal might be taken on every doubtful point.

That is in a word the history of the growth within Christianity of the principle of authority in belief. It was a process only too fatally easy to justify. It was supported, honestly and eagerly, by all that element in the Christian society which valued above all else order and regularity. "Canonicity" became a word of supreme importance. Canons of belief, canons of discipline, canons of worship, were piled up one upon another into a portentous system, the limits of which no man could define or foresee. Out of the wide-open democracy of the earliest Church there was developed the oligarchy of the episcopate and then, in the Roman world, the monarchy of the Papacy, as the most concrete expression of the principle of authority. There was no point of doctrine or of organization upon which an absolute decision could not be reached through an appeal to the supreme disposer of all the interests of Christianity.

The Great Release of the Protestant Reformation did

not, on its formal side, produce any immediate or decided change. The appeal to authority was necessary to give countenance to the Reformers as being men of caution and prudence rather than men of turmoil and rebellion. The only immediate difference was that they substituted for the authority of a human ruler the authority of an unchanging book. It seemed as if the minds of men were to be bound again in a slavery as much worse than the former as the authority was more rigid. So far as the formal attitude of the reformed churches went, there was certainly little cause for congratulation. But then came out what had always been latent in the principle of Christianity itself. Deep under all the bitter conflicts of the two confessions as to the merits of their respective authorities there ran now an ever-widening and strengthening current of thought independent of them both. More and more men began to call upon the silent witness of the "Spirit" as the true basis of religious faith. And, as they sought to work themselves out into clearness along this road, they found, looking back, that they were only the latest prophets in a series unbroken from the beginning. The authorities had tried in vain to quench the Spirit. Their seductions and their terrors alike had failed to repress the invincible instinct of the human soul to seek its deepest satisfactions in its own way.

Thus the attitude of Unitarians toward the whole subject of belief is historically prepared for. They confess themselves in the fellowship of those who in all ages have tried to maintain the rights of the Spirit as against the claims of authority, no matter by what name this may have been called. They realize perfectly how appealing the claim of authority is, how it helps to solve all doubts, reconcile all oppositions, and leave the individual free to devote himself to the practical sides of religion without troubling himself about the real bases of his faith. They see all this, but it appears to them to be a subtle form of temptation to intellectual and spiritual sloth. Those who yield to it seem to them to be seeking the lower kinds of satisfaction, to be evading a responsibility that is laid upon them by the possession of an intellectual and spiritual nature of their own, a nature so emphatically their own that they cannot entrust its highest satisfactions to the care of any one else. This is what they mean by the sanctions of the Spirit. This word "Spirit" is a large word, comprehending so much that it may readily be misunderstood as expressing little or nothing. It is open to the charge of vagueness, and it is therefore incumbent upon those who use it to make it as definite as they can.

The more general definition of the Spirit, as we are

now using the word, has already been given. It is the opposite of authority. It is that silent witness to the truth whereby we become certain of things that we cannot otherwise prove. We are, indeed, helped and comforted if we can find that others are impressed by these same truths. Especially if we can find ourselves supported by a long series of similar experiences, we are so much the more confident that the witness we are bound to believe is not a false witness and that we ourselves are not abnormal in our ways of reaching truth. But, if such support fails us, if we have to stand alone in our own day and can find no fellowship in the past, still we are none the less bound. We may revise our own thought as often and as carefully as we will. We may humble ourselves as much as we can before the teaching of those who ought to be better and wiser than we; but, after all, if it comes to standing alone with the witness of the Spirit on our side, we dare not shelter ourselves behind the wisdom or the virtue of all the ages. The armor of our honest thought must suffice for us against all temptations to the comforts of conformity. This independence of all formal authority is thus the Unitarian's first demand as he approaches the subject of religious belief.

The second is that religious truth shall not conflict with any other, or with all other forms of truth. He

does not mean by this that it shall be subject to the same kind of tests. He is quite aware that it cannot be demonstrated like a proposition in mathematics. It cannot be illustrated by experiment or observation like an alleged fact of natural science. It cannot be proved by syllogisms like a thesis in formal logic. It cannot be established by human witness like an event in history or a document in law. The witness of the Spirit is something different from all these. And yet we have a right to demand that it shall not contradict any one or all of them. The Unitarian could not accept a religious statement which would imply that two and two made five, or that the same matter could be in two places at the same time. He cannot believe that from sound premises there can follow a false conclusion, nor would he accept a statement of fact within the range of human competency if it were contradicted by credible human evidence. To do any of these things would be to act against his fundamental conviction of the unity of all truth. As he approaches any given proposition in religion he tests it by its agreement with this basic law. If it violates this, then, no matter how strongly it may appeal to his sentiment, he must reject or modify it.

Another demand that the Unitarian makes upon belief is that it shall come to him with an imperative command resulting from the nature of the belief itself.

In other words, he reacts with a certain horror from every suggestion of "the will to believe." He recognizes, indeed, a certain attitude of mind or of temper which might be called "the will not to believe anything," and he is quite willing to condemn this attitude as subversive of all intelligent approach to truth. To believe nothing is as vacant as to believe everything. In neither of these ways can the self-respecting mind arrive at any conclusions worth having. The writer recalls hearing a highly educated man declare that he could see no reason whatever why he should have any opinions on the current subjects of religious discussion. Such matters were well enough for theologians, whose special business they were, but for him they were matters of entire indifference. This man, scholar, head of a family, good citizen, no mean artist, could not see that religious convictions, no matter how reasonable they might be, had any bearing whatever upon the course of his daily life and duty. In him the will not to believe could not have any immediately dangerous consequences, but in a life less firmly planted in practical responsibilities it may readily lead to the grossest extravagance.

That is not the Unitarian's attitude. On the contrary, he has the most eager will to be a believer. To go back to our first use of the word, he "believes" in belief. Without it men seem to him to be drifting on a

sea of careless impulses, carrying them no whither, stranding them, now on this shallow, now on that, until their lives are wrecked in hopeless confusion. But — and here is the whole point of the Unitarian position — when it comes to specific beliefs, the belief in a certain definite proposition, then he cannot for a moment admit the right of the will to have anything to say in the matter. To say that one believes a thing because one wishes to believe it seems to him to be mere foolishness. It is to him a denial of everything that makes up the idea of belief. Such an attitude of the mind — if it can be called mind — he regards as the very negation of intelligence. On this basis the beliefs of the world would have no other foundation than the shifting volitions of those who profess them. Belief would be a mere matter of taste or whim: I like a thing; therefore I believe it. True it undoubtedly is that what passes for belief is only too often so entangled with our wishes and our fancies that its real nature is concealed even from ourselves. The mere wish to agree with those we esteem modifies our expressions of belief, often to such a degree that we let ourselves be deceived as to what we are really believing. It is quite possible for us to go on declaring our beliefs in language that only serves to hide the actual currents of our thought. We use our wills consciously to repress un-

comfortable stirrings of our intellectual or higher spiritual nature lest these may become so strong as to interfere with the calm current of our conformity. We lull ourselves into inaction by declaring that in these matters certainty is impossible and that we may as well hold the popular errors as invent others of our own.

There can be no doubt that in all these ways the will to believe is bound to affect us more or less; but this cannot alter the essential folly of the process. It is a process of evasion and denial. It cannot lead to constructive results. It is made up of compromises and half-waynesses. It diverts attention from the actual, positive needs of the individual to the minor considerations of expediency or beauty or order or the seductive charm of agreement with the multitude. There can be no more mischievous perversion of all that makes belief worth having than this persistent subjectivity of approach to it. If it is folly in him who practises it, it is something worse in him who teaches it. The Unitarian should be the last to allow his beliefs to be resolved into a mere matter of fancies and habits. They are not things that can be disposed of in any such summary way. They are the thing most precious to him of all his ideal possessions, and he must be prepared to defend them by some argument better than his own preference or the automatic action of his mind.

But, if he may not appeal to authority, if he may not select his beliefs according to his tastes, where shall the Unitarian find the sanctions that will satisfy him? Unitarianism is often charged with being mere cold intellectualism, as if it believed that religious truth rested wholly upon intellectual satisfactions. This charge it distinctly denies. None knows better than the Unitarian that the mind alone is incapable of working itself out to conclusions that deserve the name of religious. All that he demands is that his intellect, because it is a part of the divine gift to man, shall not be degraded and insulted by being asked to accept things that are contrary to its normal processes. In his belief his intellect must have its rights, and so long as this is denied him, he cannot dignify propositions with the name of beliefs. They may be sentiments, impulses, feelings, fancies, — what you please, only not beliefs. The word he likes best in this connection is reason, and by reason he means, not any definable process of reasoning, not dialectics, but that just balancing of all considerations which results in "reasonableness." This is what reason — the *ratio* of the schools — has always meant, when it was not perverted to the uses of some hair-splitting faction. It means that enlightenment of the human soul which frees it from the shadows of all perversions and distortions, which lifts it up above the

reach of all lower motives into the clearer air of a calm certainty that nothing can confuse or diminish.

In this higher reason, the intellect has indeed its part, but it is not the whole of it. Religion is primarily a thing of the emotions, and these have their seat, not in that part of man we call the intellect, but in that still vaguer region we call the soul. Precisely where the line is to be drawn between these two we do not know. The mind is undoubtedly influenced in its conclusions by the working of our emotional nature. Our emotions partake also of the intellectual within us. Without its guiding and controlling force, the emotions would run riot, conflicting with each other in a chaos of misrule. Without them the reasoning powers would work themselves out to sterile conclusions. If a religious proposition commends itself to but one of these sides of our perceptive capacity, it remains barren, unrelated to all the rest of us, a something separate from that sum total of our qualities we call ourself. Such has not infrequently been the apparent solution of the religious problem. Men have fancied they were elevating religion when they set it thus outside their real every-day self. They felt this because of a deep-seated distrust of themselves as unworthy beings — vessels of wrath, or what not, so that religion came to seem a thing foreign to their essential humanity.

Now here the Unitarian feels himself to be on ground that is quite his own. He does not believe himself to be an altogether unworthy factor in the good world of God, and therefore he is not afraid to trust himself to the leadings of his own best thought and feeling. When he says he believes a thing, he means that this thing appeals to all that is best in the whole man that he is. The highest sanction he can find for his beliefs is in the inner witness of his own enlightened reason and his own disciplined emotion. Through these, and through these alone, he hears that convincing voice which he cannot otherwise define except as the voice of the spirit of all truth. That in more precise definition is the witness of the Spirit, which we have been setting over against the evidence of authority and the power of tradition. It means to the Unitarian the highest and the most sacred of all sanctions. By it he tries and measures all authorities and all traditions. Whenever, for example, the Church, most ancient and reverend of authorities, the depositary of the most sacred and most certain of traditions, asks him to accept this or that proposition as true, he cannot do otherwise than submit it to the test of its agreement with this supreme judgment of the Spirit coming to him through the agency of his own highest powers of mind and heart and soul. He uses these words — mind, heart, soul — because they are the cur-

rent coin of discussion in these subjects, but all he means by them is that taken together they represent himself. In the last resort, he must rely upon his own powers of spiritual perception to interpret to him the ways of God with men. If they cannot do it, then nothing can do it. What comes to him in this way as true, is true to him, and beyond this he cannot go. It is not his concern whether it be true to some one else; for that he is not responsible. Neither is he answerable for the absolute truth as it exists "in the mind of God." All he can do as an honest man is to examine with all seriousness his own thought and feeling, get all the light upon it he can from every worthy source, and then, in all humility, confess what he finds there as for the time being his belief.

These are the premises from which the Unitarian goes on to make clear to himself his thought upon the several topics which make up the sum of Christian faith. In so far as these premises are sound, the conclusions set forth in the following chapters will have weight; in so far as they are weak, those conclusions will be open to a just criticism.

CHAPTER II

MIRACLE

And so no more our hearts shall plead
For miracle and sign;
Thy order and thy faithfulness
Are all in all divine.

—*J. W. Chadwick.*

THERE are some words in the traditional language of theology for which Unitarians have an affectionate regard. They would be glad to retain them as aids to their own thought, and they do retain them, stripping away from them, so far as they can, the false and distorted notions that have become attached to them, and giving to them larger and truer meanings in harmony with their own principles of interpretation. Such words are, for example "revelation" and "inspiration," with which we deal in another chapter. These are words permitting various interpretations, but conveying, no matter under what distortion, always a similar idea. Unitarians insist, indeed, upon such definitions of these words as give to them, in their opinion, the deepest significance; but they recognize the value and the historical importance of the definitions opposed to their own.

The word "miracle" is not such a word. It has,

historically and actually, but one rational meaning. In that meaning it has always been used for the purposes of Christian argument, and the moment we depart from this usage by ever so slight a shade we are in another world of thought. Yet there is hardly a word in the vocabulary of Christian speculation with which such tricks of interpretation have been played as with this. In their desire to hold fast the something good that might be hidden under it, men have tried consciously to pack meanings into the word "miracle," that were never dreamed of by the authorities on whom they have imagined themselves to be resting. It is therefore especially important for the Unitarian to set himself right on this point at an early stage. As he looks over the history of the thought of Christians about the miraculous, he finds two aspects of it that have persistently kept their place. First, he finds that Christians, like the men of other religions from whom they derived their ideas, were always reluctant to accept the notion of a universe of law and order in which the lives of men were to be included. If there were any such region at all, where law could be thought of as prevailing, it was the world of "nature" conceived as something outside of and beyond human experience. Man must be kept independent of such restraints. Wherever he came into contact with that other world of law,

some kind of exemption must be his peculiar privilege. To make him subject to any fixed system of administering the universe seemed to be an infringement upon the liberty which was his birthright. That is one of the presuppositions of the miraculous: the necessity of keeping man free from any inevitable law.

The second is that divine power, existing outside the world of nature and man, reserved to itself the right of arbitrary interference in the ordinary working of "natural" law, and this for some purpose connected with the spiritual life of man. God acted upon man's powers of apprehending divine things through occasional and direct manifestation of himself in dramatic form. Such interference was conceived of as proof of the special divine nature of the idea or the lesson with which it was associated — a certificate, so to speak, that here was indeed a divine communication to man. Upon these two ideas — the possibility of a special divine interruption in the ordinary course of a universe separate from the God who rules it, and the necessity of such occasional interruption in order to give a stamp of authenticity to alleged revelations of God to man — rests the whole vast structure of Christian thought and experience with regard to the miraculous. First, the possibility of miracle, and then its necessity, as a proof of divine revelation.

The definition of miracle has already been implied in the statement just made. Miracle is the interruption of the ordinary process by which the universe of nature and of man is governed. Such interruption occurs through the beneficent will of God at such crises in human affairs as may seem to him best suited to impress upon men some needed lesson of faith or morals. That, and no other, is the definition of miracle which makes any reasonable discussion of it possible. It is the definition upon which the Church has always acted. By it the whole notion of the miraculous must stand or fall. It is true that from the beginning of the influence of modern philosophy upon religious thought innumerable attempts have been made to modify this definition, so as to bring it into harmony with the general tendencies of the modern "scientific" world. It is a little remarkable that the clearest and most positive declaration against both aspects of the miraculous should have come at the very beginning of the discussion. Spinoza (d. 1677) laid down, with a clearness that admitted of no misunderstanding, two counter-propositions: (1) there is no such thing as miracle. (2) If there were, it would prove nothing as to the value of religious truths. Naturally such distinct utterance was far too "advanced" for Spinoza's day, and in the reaction against it various halfway devices were resorted to. It was said, for

example, that the definition of miracle as here laid down was insufficient. Miracle was not an interference with the law, but only with the law as our imperfect understanding of it shows it to us. No sane man would pretend that we really know the laws of nature and of life with any such thoroughness that we can be positively sure when an infringement of them takes place. All we know is that in this vessel there is, so far as we can perceive at this moment, water, and in the same vessel there is at the next moment, so far as we can perceive, and without the intervention of any natural process, wine. How this change occurred we do not know. There may be a law beyond the reach of our human observation, yet quite as regular as any we can observe, in accordance with which this phenomenon took place. In the absence of all power to watch the working of such a law we are not justified in saying it does not exist. We ought therefore to extend our definition of miracle and say: "Miracle is an *apparent* but not an actual violation of natural law, occurring by a direct action of the divine will and designed to convey some needed message to mankind."

Another method was to assert that in the reports of miracles we have accounts of events that did not even involve the supposition of occult natural laws, but only false explanations of well-known facts of nature. When,

for example, we hear of a miraculous opening of the Red Sea to let the Israelites go over dry shod, this was only the report of a perfectly possible occurrence. Under certain conditions of wind and tide, a ford, known to the inhabitants in the neighborhood, might have become passable, and this might well have been looked upon by the devout Israelites as a special act of divine Providence and magnified by later times into the detailed narrative of the Book of the Exodus. Several conclusions might be drawn from this method of approach. One might examine carefully all alleged miracles and reject all those which, like the parting of the Red Sea, can be explained on the ground of observable fact. But what, then, of the rest? Either they must be retained as miraculous until we discover (or invent) a "rational" explanation or they too must be rejected on the assumption that there must be a rational explanation of them, though for the present it eludes our inquiry. In either case it is obvious that this so-called rationalizing process in reality does away with the idea of the miraculous without putting in place of it any sound and consistent doctrine of the divine method in dealing with man. It has done its share in making people accustomed to the idea of criticism of all miraculous narrations; but as a systematic method of approach to the real question of the possibility and the

value of miracle it is one of the least fruitful that can be imagined. In so far as it is a critical method at all it is a criticism of the reports of miracle, not of the fact of miracle itself. The implication is that a better reporter might have given us a higher degree of confidence in the reality of the thing reported. That is an obvious evasion of the point really at issue.

Again, it has been said that the true way to reach satisfaction on this whole matter is to distinguish with the utmost care between what may be regarded as good miracles on the one hand and bad miracles on the other. Good miracles are such as are properly attested by credible witnesses, are performed without special apparatus of any kind, and are plainly designed for some lofty spiritual purpose. Bad miracles are such as lack sufficient human evidence, involve a " professional " equipment, or are performed with an unworthy or trifling object. It becomes, therefore, the obvious duty of every one to convince himself upon these points. In every case of an alleged miracle, we are bound first to examine the evidence as to the occurrence of something apparently out of the common course of human experience. Then we must inquire whether this occurrence was perhaps produced by any of the familiar devices of magic, or by whatever other name we may choose to call the professional occultism which has played its part

in the development of all peoples. And then we must convince ourselves that the purpose for which the alleged miracle was performed was one worthy of the special activity of the divine will.

It is obvious that in following out these processes of inquiry men have taken a step toward a truly rational comprehension of the whole subject. Their object has generally been to reduce as far as possible the number of authentic miracles. The inspiring motive of such critical study has been to save, if possible, the few miracles of the New Testament from the destruction that seemed inevitable if they were to be put in the same category with all the other alleged miraculous occurrences of all peoples and of all times. So far this kind of effort is worthy of all praise. Even to reduce the scope of the miracle-loving instinct of mankind is a service to the cause of a reasonable faith. But it is obvious also that when all possible criticism has been applied along these lines, the fact of miracle in itself still remains unquestioned and we are no nearer a real solution of the problem than before. It must be noticed also that in carrying out the requirements of this analytical method we are continually applying human standards to a matter which is by its very definition beyond the reach of human powers. We ask for credible human witness to a process which no human eye can follow and no human

mind can grasp. We try to draw a line between professional cleverness and "inspired" commission, when such a line, if drawn at all, must be drawn by a power greater than any that is at our disposal. We are expected to distinguish between worthy and trifling purposes — as if we held the clue to the plan of God in dealing with the universe. And after all these impossible demands have been met, there still remains the voluminous record of duly attested miracles as far removed as ever from our capacity to understand or to profit by them.

Then, once more, there is the figurative method of dealing with miracle. Men have pleased themselves with saying: The real marvel of the universe is not to be found in interruptions of law and order, but in the law and order itself. In the stately march of the worlds about us and their suggestion of greater worlds beyond, in the orderly succession of the seasons, in the blessed change of day and night, in the silent processes of seed-time and harvest, in the shaping of man to his birth, in the slow unfolding of his powers and in the wonder of his accomplishment — here, we are told, is the true miracle. Not until we can explain how the seed becomes the tree have we any occasion to trouble ourselves with the little puzzles about water being made wine and sick men being healed and dead men being brought back to life. If men must be encouraged

to develop their instinct for the marvellous, let them dwell upon the really marvellous things, not upon the fantastic inventions of priests and madmen. It is clear that when men have gone as far as this in trying to make the word "miracle" acceptable to a doubting world, there is not much left of the idea with which they started. A figurative miracle is no miracle at all. It is only the regular process of universal harmony presented in its most striking aspects. It has nothing in common with a miracle in the true definition of the word except its appeal to the dramatic instinct of mankind. The two are as far removed from each other as a serious drama of real life and the wildest melodrama. Nothing remains but the word.

We are thus led by several stages to the Unitarian thought of the miraculous. Here, as everywhere else, the Unitarian is possessed by the ideas of law, order, and harmony. He refuses to follow any of the processes we have just outlined, in order to save a word which is to him full of the most dangerous suggestions. His reasons for this attitude are somewhat as follows. In the first place, to his mind all miracles must stand or fall together. There can be no such thing as great miracles and small, good miracles and bad, whole miracles and partial ones, true miracles and false. He has no more interest in the miracles of the New Testa-

ment than in those of the Old or in those of all the period since until the present moment — not to mention those by which all the non-Christian religions of the past and the present have maintained and still maintain their hold upon the ignorance and credulity of their followers, He recognizes, of course, an infinite variety in the details of presentation, from the simple narratives of wonder-working in the New Testament and elsewhere to the gross brutalities of savage fetichism. He is quite able to discern all grades of motive, from the lofty patriotic purpose of ancient Hebrew miracle and the noble moral aim of the New Testament to the vulgar greed of the mediæval priesthood and the wild personal solicitations of primitive passion in less developed cults. He sees all this and gives to it its due weight; but he will not allow himself to be led by these details away from the one all-important fact, that, no matter under what disguises, the miraculous element remains always and everywhere the same. If divine power is to be thought of as working by spasmodic and arbitrary interruptions of natural law at all, such interruptions must be possible at any place, at any time, and among any people. His concern is, therefore, with the *principle* of the miraculous and with this alone. If he could admit the possibility of miracle at all, he would be ready to admit it everywhere.

Unitarians, then, meet the whole proposition of the miraculous with a general denial. There is no such thing as miracle. They reject all the methods we have enumerated for making the notion of miracle acceptable to the rational mind. On many points of theology shades and compromises may be pardoned; on this never. They will not be misled by any subtleties of speculation or of logic into any halfway settlement of this problem. They recur once again to their fixed starting-point of the unity of the plan by which the universe, including man, is governed, and they reject miracle because it seems to them to be the negation of this great positive truth. They go back to their fundamental notion of man's native capacity to receive the highest spiritual truths, and reject miracle because it seems to them to be absolutely at variance with the existence of that capacity. If men cannot comprehend spiritual things unless they are enforced by the startling accompaniments of violated law, then men are very different from what the Unitarian believes them to be.

It is easy, of course, to find attractive analogies in support of the *belief* in miracle. Children, it is said, must be led into the ways of duty by appealing to their sense of wonder. Dramatic episodes will do for them what no amount of insistence upon law would ever accomplish. Criminals may be influenced by persuad-

ing them of the terrors that await the evil-doer. They know the law well enough, but its very sameness and rigidity repel them, while the dread of something incalculable and mysterious appeals to them with all the attraction of a game of chance. The idle and indifferent may be waked out of their physical or mental sloth by a sense of some peculiar and specific consequence better than by any insistence upon unvarying law. And if these things are so in the dealing of human authority with those for whom it is responsible, shall we not suppose that the divine governance of the universe will take a similar attitude toward the sinful world of men?

That is pretty, but it is not relevant. The Unitarian refuses to believe that the divine method is adjusted to the needs of the lame and the lazy among men. Rather, he believes that, like the wisest human pedagogy, the divine teaching comes to us most forcibly and most permanently when it appeals to the highest in us and leaves the lowest to correct itself. He remembers the word of the great Teacher that it is a wicked and adulterous generation that seeks after signs. He feels that if there was anything in the teaching of Jesus clearer than all else, it was this constant appeal to the highest and the refusal to rely upon the sense of the marvellous to impress his hearers. That Jesus believed, as every one in his day and from his day until recent times believed, in the possibility of

miracle there can be no doubt. He probably believed, if he thought of it at all, that the earth was flat and that the sun moved about it; but we do not on that account accept these discarded notions of natural phenomena. He believed in miracle; but in this matter as in others he rose above the vulgar conceptions of his day and of many succeeding days. He did not base his appeal to men upon the performance of miraculous works. It is altogether probable that he believed himself gifted with supernatural powers. Like all great leaders of men, he had his contradictory sides. He utilized the material he found to his hand and sought to impress his spiritual mission upon his community in ways that would be acceptable to it. The Unitarian can no more accept the so-called miracles of Jesus than he can those of other alleged wonder-workers; but he is quite ready to believe that Jesus was gifted with the power of making a credulous people believe that he was in a highly specific sense the direct agent of God. It requires, alas! but little real spiritual endowment to do that, as the history of human credulity abundantly proves, and that is one of the strongest reasons why the Unitarian, devoted follower of Jesus that he is, declines to lay any emphasis upon this side of his activity. It seems to him not a service of honor but rather of dishonor to claim authority for the word of Jesus on the

basis of so cheap and vulgar an appeal as this. What rational connection of ideas is there, he asks himself, between the sublime spiritual conceptions of the Sermon on the Mount and the multiplication of a loaf of bread by one hundred? — or between the imperative social doctrine of the sanctity of marriage and the turning of a jar of water into a jar of wine? — or between the supreme declaration "God is spirit" and the power to discern that the woman by the well had had five husbands? "There *is* no connection," the Unitarian answers. The truth of these great spiritual and moral proclamations is attested by the response they meet in the hearts of men who are capable of receiving them and of interpreting them to their fellows. It makes not the slightest difference whether they are accompanied by dramatic appeals to the lower instinct of wonder or not. If they are true in themselves they are true — if not, no marvels can make them so.

To the Unitarian it seems a degradation of all that is highest and best in Christianity to confuse it with this other world of occult manifestation. Indeed, the Church itself has always felt this danger and has tried from time to time to set limits to the working of the miraculous, as it has tried in every way to limit the operation of forces dangerous to its control. It has sought to define the conditions of miracle, while utiliz-

ing the principle of it to the fullest extent. For example, the Church has combated from the start what it describes as "magic," *i.e.* the summoning of occult forces to aid human action in unworthy ways. The Unitarian sees, however, in magic only another side of miracle — or, to put it the other way, he sees in miracle only magic applied by worthy people to seemingly worthy ends. There is a very good analogy here in the comparison one is compelled to make in these days between the alleged "absent treatment" of disease by specially gifted persons and the manifestations of witchcraft. In the one case a person is affected by another person to his advantage; in the other case to his injury. It requires little thought to see that the delusions of the one process are in no essential respect different from those of the other. In each case there is a certain slight foundation of psychological fact, just enough upon which to build up a fictitious system of beliefs and usages harmful alike to those who practise them and those who are practised upon. So, and not otherwise, is it with the distinction between miracle and magic. In the one case there is an alleged compact of humanity with powers of darkness to do the works of darkness, to bring diseases upon people, to rouse the passions of love or of revenge, to influence the course of justice, to bring success in business at another's cost.

In the other case there is an alleged special relation between certain men and God, whereby they are made mediums of the divine will to accomplish good results, to certify to the truth of doctrines, to carry conviction of sin, to reconcile enemies, to heal disease. In both cases there is a certain slight psychological basis. The *belief* in the magical and in the miraculous does produce some results, just as undoubtedly the belief in the influence of the changing moon upon the state of the weather produces, in the minds of those who have it, results absolutely independent of the truth or falsehood of the belief itself. The belief of the ignorant hospital patient in the immediate efficacy of the clinical thermometer is as certainly an influence for good as the therapeutic value of the process itself is certainly *nil*. We have constantly to distinguish between the belief in a thing and the reality of the thing itself.

The Church has done well to restrict as far as possible the formal limits within which this belief in special interpositions of the divine will in human affairs might safely move. It was worth while to diminish to the utmost the abuse of human credulity which was the stock in trade of all the professors of magic. But what the Unitarian insists upon is that the Church has always been actuated by the desire to control a monopoly in supplying an alleged demand of frail humanity rather than by

a single purpose to know and to teach what is true. Men demand some form of satisfaction for the craving after the marvellous, and the Church will undertake to meet this with a supply suited to the best interests of mankind. What a world this would be, if we were to believe nothing we cannot see, love nothing we cannot touch, fear nothing we cannot feel! Since there is so much we cannot understand, why not accept the pleasant tales the Church has preserved for us, in the spirit of children listening to fairy tales by the eerie light of the evening fire — half believing, half doubting, knowing they are venturing into a world of uncanny dreads and fictions, yet feeling the subtle relation of these to everyday experience?

The Unitarian feels the charm of all this. If he did not he would not be able to understand so clearly why he must guard himself against it. If it were true that the Church has regarded the miraculous element merely as the poetic decoration of religious faith, — a something akin to fairy tale or natural legend, — it would not be worth his while to trouble himself about the matter at all. The Church, from the beginning until now, bases its claim to the allegiance of men upon the sanction of miracles. Reduce the volume of the miraculous as it may, define and redefine as it will the limits within which it may work, the fact remains that no important

member of the Christian Church to-day could venture to banish the miraculous from its creeds. The Church begins the history of its founder with the miracle of a virgin birth and ends it with the miracle of a physical resurrection from the dead. Some of its members would keep these and reject all others; but the immense majority cling to the miracles of the New Testament and stop there — as if divine power were, so to speak, exhausted by the effort of starting a new religion! Others again, with more consistency, hold fast to the immense volume of mediæval and modern miracle — fitting it in somehow with cheerful ingenuity into the requirements of the modern "scientific" world and undismayed by all revelations of fraud or error.

With these last the Unitarian feels a certain sympathy. If he aims to be consistent in essentials, so do they. He tries to be true to the principle of authority which he finds within himself — to that "enlightened conscience" we have sought elsewhere to define. They are true to the principle of authority which they find in an institution guaranteed by its own assertions of a divine commission as a bank might guarantee its deposits by its own notes of hand. If he were not a Unitarian he would certainly join with those of his fellow-Christians who know best what they believe and are best able to give account of it. He is a Unitarian largely because

he cannot enter at all into that world of occultism in which they, more than any other Christians, live and have their intellectual being. It would all seem to him grotesque were it not inwrought with ideas so infinitely serious. The teaching of the Church is that unless these miracles are true, the world of mankind is lost. Without the miracle of the virgin birth there could be no reconciliation between God and man such as is needed to save man from perpetual opposition to the will of God. Without the miracle of the resurrection of the man Jesus we could have no assurance as to the continuance of our individual existence beyond this earthly life. Without the constantly repeated miracle of the Mass the soul of man could not be kept in its right relation to the infinite source of all spiritual certainty. The Roman Catholic declares these things with clearness and consistency. The orthodox Protestant coquets with them in every conceivable variation of confusion and half-meaning. The Unitarian clears himself of the whole entanglement by the one single, confident declaration: "There is no miracle, because the God in whom I believe needs no such devices as this to make himself a place in the heart of man." It is inconceivable to him that any such dramatic demonstrations should add one particle to the force of that inner consciousness which is to him the sole and sufficient wit-

ness to the divine governance of the universe in which he is a part.

The Unitarian does not trouble himself to examine into the credibility of the evidence for alleged miraculous events. To him the very notion of human evidence for a divine manifestation is preposterous. How can I, a mere human being, judge whether a given phenomenon is really miraculous or not? Certainly the witness of other human beings, all as incapable as myself, can be worth nothing to me. Though a thousand persons should declare that they had seen a miracle, this would mean nothing, except that they had seen something they could not account for. That is an experience we all have, but we do not on that account call such experiences miraculous. We accept human testimony on matters about which human evidence is possible, and on these only. When we pass beyond these we enter into a region where we have no sanction except faith alone. Now the Unitarian believes that faith concerns itself with spiritual matters, whereas miracle has to do with physical phenomena, and physical phenomena can be proved only by physical means. Take, for example, the chief miracles of the Church tradition, the virgin birth and the resurrection of the body. These are physical facts or they are nothing. We may spiritualize them as we like, but the value of

all this spiritualizing process rests upon the physical fact. If there was no virgin birth in fact, then all the superstructure of theology and philosophy built upon it falls to pieces. It would be idle to evolve an abstract theory of the necessity of an individual incarnation of deity through a virgin birth unless there were an actual historical fact to correspond to this. To that physical fact, therefore, we need human testimony, and such testimony is entirely lacking. To the fact of a virgin birth there can be but one credible witness, and, so far as we know, that witness was silent. But, supposing we were convinced in the only possible way that the laws of nature had been so far violated that new life had appeared upon the earth without the mediation of a life germ, what then? There would stand the fact, but what of it? Its very exceptional character would alone deprive it of all meaning, for phenomena have meaning to us only as they are related to other phenomena. The being so produced would have no claim upon our attention except as a curiosity of nature. The Church has seen fit to ascribe to this alleged virgin birth the character of "sinlessness," but here again is a confusion of the physical and the spiritual. "Sin" is a spiritual thing; a human birth is a physical thing. What have they to do with each other? "Because this man came into the world by means of a virgin birth, there-

fore he was without sin," says the Church. The orthodox Protestant sects have done their best to make this declaration mean something different from what it was intended to mean. The Unitarian rejects it absolutely, because, using words in their natural meanings, he finds himself led into a tissue of absurdities whenever he applies rational tests to it. The Church has found a use for this miracle in emphasizing its doctrine of the essentially sinful nature of man as a being partly material. Unitarians, believing that the idea of sin has no connection whatever with the fact of man's material nature, but only with the use he makes of it in the moral and spiritual struggle of life, find no sense at all in the notion of a human being produced, as the Church puts it, "without sin."

Similar reflections, only in a somewhat reversed order, apply to the thought of Unitarians about the alleged miracle of the resurrection of Jesus. Singular that Christian theology, which showed such contempt for the material side of man, could not get away from the idea of the preciousness of the body, after all. One might have supposed that when the martyr-death of the Master had been accomplished nothing could have been more welcome to the feeling of his followers than the thought that now he was freed from the trammels of the impeding flesh and become pure spirit, free for-

ever to enter into communion with the spirits of those who loved him and mourned for him. But no! one more demonstration of his really human nature was needed. The body that had been to them the visible symbol of the radiant soul within must be brought back in full living energy once more. It could not be that this material shell should suffer the fate of common clay, returning into the universe of matter from which it had sprung — for it must be remembered, and we shall have occasion to remind ourselves, that the Church maintains the actuality of the human in Christ. This body must be otherwise removed from the ways of men; and so it "ascended," that is, it entered into the world of spirit, where God lives forever. The Church, with its easy powers of reconciling the obviously irreconcilable, has kept this tangle of ideas alive by every device of doctrine and of ritual. Protestant orthodoxy has rationalized upon it or refused to think about it at all. Unitarianism faces the matter frankly. It denies the physical fact of the resurrection because it is a fact as to which no human evidence is possible. It would be possible to demonstrate by human evidence — evidence, however, needing rather careful corroboration — that a human organism had ceased to live. It would be possible also to demonstrate by easier evidence that it was alive. But to prove that life had entered into

lifeless material is as impossible as it is for human powers to grasp the principle of life itself. The Unitarian could believe anything more easily than he could that the detail of evidence in any case was sufficiently accurate to establish this violation of all human experience.

But again supposing the impossible — that divine power should so far have violated its own law as to bring this dead man back into life, — what then? Well, — a dead man would have come to life, a thing that had never happened before and has never happened since; what of it? Again we have to say that the very exceptional character of the phenomenon deprives it of all value. It has no relation to anything that concerns us. *We* are not going to be brought back from physical death into physical life. Theology in its wildest moments has never reached a definition of bodily resurrection that need greatly alarm us. It cherishes the phrase, but the alleged fact has never, except in the extravagant visions of "millenianism," played any important part. The most that has been done is to make the physical resurrection of Jesus the promise of an ultimate spiritual awakening in some undefined stage of being towards which our present life, properly conducted under the guidance of an authorized Church, is directing us. We touch here upon the baffling doctrine of a future

life, a subject we must reserve for another chapter. Our purpose here is only to show the attitude of Unitarians toward the miraculous, first in itself and then as a means of certifying to religious truth. So far as the story of the resurrection of Jesus is concerned, Unitarians may feel the charm of the narrative, its touching appeal to the sentiment of personal affection, its altogether human clinging to the life that now is. They reject the story, however, not only on the grounds we have been enumerating, but also because they feel it an obstacle in the way of the highest comprehension of the message of Jesus. The spiritual life he taught was not a thing of another world. It was the life of the spirit shared by every man that cometh into the world — not every man that goes out of the world. The Kingdom of God he sought to establish was the reign of righteousness in the lives of men here and now. The resurrection he cared about was the deliverance of the soul of man from the slavery of sin into the freedom of the law of righteousness. The ascension that he promised was no stage-exit into an impossible heaven, but the rising of the individual soul into harmony with the inevitable order that is the soul of the universe of God. The wicked and adulterous generations still go on seeking after signs and wonders; but the mind that can see clearly, the heart that can feel warmly, the soul that

responds promptly to all the influences of the Spirit, needs no appeal to the wonder-seeking impulse. Rather it feels itself dragged down to a lower level of apprehension, cheapened and degraded by the confusions and evasions of those who profess to be the spiritual guides of men.

Let it not, however, be supposed that Unitarians are blind and deaf to the value of the sense of wonder in stimulating religious emotion. They only insist that this feeling shall be raised by things worthy and not by things unworthy. It seems to them pitiable that people should be asked to spend their wonder upon the abnormal when the normal and regular is so vastly worthier of their regard. They cannot be impressed by the monstrous fiction of a virgin birth while the sacred mystery of motherhood surrounds every new life that comes here on earth to bear witness to the perpetually renewed union of human love with human duty. It seems to them far nobler to take these common things and set them in the light of a continuous revelation of God to man than to thrust them out of sight and put in their place some imaginary marvel that will not bear a moment's rational thought and stands in no vital relation to any experience of humanity.

Why should they be impressed with the tale of a resurrection of the body? Unitarians, like all other

men, feel the strain and stress of earthly life. They will not rebel against it. They accept the struggle of the body and the spirit as a part of that law of conflict whereby this life moves on; but they accept also with still greater readiness the thought of death as the normal and happy end of life on earth. They see in the experience of men how death works its marvels in human hearts equally with birth. They see how it has inspired the highest poetry, has stimulated the noblest ambition to take up bravely the work our dear ones have laid down, how it softens and idealizes the figures that life made stern, how it calls up tender images of rest and peace, and they ask: What wonder of violated law could be half so wonderful as this silent working of the law we welcome as divine?

That is the Unitarian attitude towards the two most imposing among the miraculous traditions of Christianity. These two stand apart from the general record of miracle as the chief illustrations of wonders brought about without the intervention of human agency. In these divine power is conceived of as acting directly upon the order of the physical world, commanding it to change for the moment its normal processes in order that mankind might receive the more willingly some great and imperative benefit. If there were any form

of the miraculous that could command a respectful attention, it would certainly be found here. If, then, Unitarians cannot accept these, it is obvious that they can find still less to attract them in the vast volume of miraculous record in which the wonder is brought about through the intervention of some human agent. It will be said perhaps that in our scientific age it is merely fighting with windmills to insist upon this matter; but it must be remembered that an important branch of the Christian Church declares that its priests have power to perform and really do perform, daily and hourly, as complete a miracle as was ever imagined in the wildest extravagance of credulity, and that failure to accept and take part in this miracle involves spiritual death in this world and the next. We cannot forget that this historic Church, in conferring its highest distinctions, makes these dependent upon a certain number of "well-attested" miracles and claims for itself the power of determining by adequate tests the validity of all alleged miraculous manifestations. Nor can we overlook the latent readiness of the majority of mankind, unaffected by all the scientific method of our time, to grasp at every straw of occult appeal that can seem to offer any help in meeting the mystery of life. The credulous state of mind exists to-day as it has always existed. The only defence against it is in draw-

ing clear and firm the line that separates evidence from delusion, and that is what the Unitarian tries to do. In definitely denying the miraculous he opens the way for a clearer vision of spiritual things than any comfortable acquiescence could ever supply. He does not think of it as a loss, but every way as a gain.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF MAN

Le christianisme, en brisant l'homme en extérieur et intérieur, le monde en terre et ciel, en enfer et paradis a décomposé l'unité humaine. . . .

— *Henri-Frédéric Amiel.*

SYSTEMS of religion are wont to begin with the largest possible abstractions about the nature of God, the universe and God's dealing with it, good and evil in their abstract meaning, their conflict with each other, and their final reconciliation in some satisfactory adjustment. Then, when these large foundations have been laid, we are introduced to man as an element in the vast scheme of things. He is brought before us as an incident in the working of a system that might conceivably have existed without him. We are shown his relation to God as the result of a divine plan. He is of himself essentially antagonistic to God, and hence needs reconciliation through mediations of various kinds, — through sacrifices of propitiation and sacrifices of expiation, through intermediate gods and demigods, through incarnations of deity and deifications of hu-

manity, through priesthoods and churches claiming possession of the means of reconcilement. In one way or another man is represented as involved in a religious compact he has had no share in making. He is somehow, as it were, the victim of powers that may work their will upon him, and all he can do is to find ways of so dealing with these powers as to save himself from wrong or injury.

Christianity has not escaped from the entanglements of such a method. It too has had its "scheme" of religion, its philosophies of God, the universe, good and evil, sin (*i.e.* opposition) and reconciliation, and it too has had to find a place for man in the midst of these greater abstractions. In Christianity as elsewhere man has been made to appear a victim to a world of powers foreign to his own nature, and he has been driven into inventing means of escape. Harder still, these ways of escape, the means of reconcilement, the sacraments, the priesthoods, the church institutions, have in turn been represented to him as divine in their origin and their sanctions. Man himself has almost disappeared under the weight of systems and institutions gradually piled upon him, all claiming a right over him in virtue of some essentially divine commission. If at any point he dared to assert the inherent right of his own manhood, he has been driven back by the re-

minder of his own nothingness and the all-sufficing control of the divine "system."

Now the thought of Unitarians about religion follows an entirely different method. It does not deny that there may be a sound philosophy of the universe involving in itself a doctrine of God, of life, of good and evil, and of man in his manifold relations to all these. Only, the Unitarian feels that ultimate certainty on these matters cannot be attained by finite man, and that, therefore, speculation about them belongs rather in the region of philosophy than of religion. His religious thinking begins with and centres about the idea of man himself as an independent, self-determining being. His religion is a religion of humanity, starting from human impulses, limited by human capacities, working by human methods, and expressing itself in human ways.

For the convenience of his thought the Unitarian has certain definitions of man which serve him with an approach to accuracy. First of all: man appears to him as a unit. Earlier theologies laid weight upon the distinctions obvious in man's nature. It is, indeed, impossible to think at all on the subject without perceiving the complexity of the human being. He has a physical body, made up of the same elements that enter into other forms of material life. Man's body is

subject to the same laws of procreation, of growth, decay, and re-formation that govern the world of matter as a whole. Further, there is, in addition to the material, also a psychic or vital element, common to man with all organic life, — the principle by which his material existence is kept going and is carried out to its finest expressions. Again, there is in man what we in our despair of language call the "soul" or 'spirit," the element in his nature which most clearly differentiates him from all other living organisms. By this he thinks, with conscious reference to an end; he feels, in conscious obedience to emotions of love or hate, bringing himself thus into vital relations with other human beings. By this also he wills, and is thus led to actions, through which his whole personality reaches out and affects the world about him; and, finally, by this also he aspires, hopes, prays, worships, touches at a thousand points the greater life whereby his own lesser personality is surrounded.

This threefold aspect of man's nature is obvious. It might be even further refined upon, even more minutely subdivided, but for our present purpose this is enough. It appears under this form in most early Christian writings. It is used there to describe, not only the various elements in the nature of the individual man, but also various classes of mankind. In both the Gnos-

tic and the Montanistic systems there appear material (*hylic*) men, animal (*psychic*) men and spiritual (*pneumatic*) men. This distinction merges easily into the other and more familiar one of body, mind and soul which we shall employ here generally as simpler and as sufficiently exact. In fact Christian theology never succeeded in drawing a very clear line between the psychic and the pneumatic, the *anima* and the *spiritus* in man. What it was clear about was, that these two elements stood together over against the merely material. That antagonism it emphasized and developed in every way. Its greatest teacher, Augustine, made the conflict between the material and the spiritual the central feature of his thought, and in the great awakening of Protestantism it was this idea again that rallied the forces of opposition in the most effective way. The Unitarian cannot be blind to the fraction of truth that is contained in this cherished tradition of the Church. He is perfectly able to see that historically it has done a great work in the world, but for himself he would keep it as far as possible out of sight. What interests him in man is not this very obvious diversity of aspect, but the essential unity of nature. He did not need the researches of modern science to teach him the acute interdependence of body, mind, and soul for the sound and effective working of each. He was perfectly prepared to learn how

hard it is to draw the lines that separate body from mind and mind from soul. It was no shock to him to hear that physical pain is partly subject to mental control and that mental processes, emotions, passions, may partly be reduced to physical terms, tested and measured by physical devices. These things have come to him only as confirmations of what he had thought out in less formal ways before — that man is essentially a unit and cannot, therefore, be treated theologically as a being divided against himself and so doomed to ruin.

It is in this spirit and having in mind this dominant sense of unity that the Unitarian approaches the questions of man's origin, his obligations, and his destiny. The charming fables of the Hebrews, as well as those of other races, in regard to the origin of man interest him as so many naïve attempts to account for the obvious facts of man's common experience. As man appears here on earth, in daily struggle, each one with himself and all with their surroundings, it is plain that he is limited by certain controlling conditions. Men should be good, wise, just, generous, and they are none of these things. They should love peace and they are at war; they should be content with little, and they are striving ever after more at the cost of others; above all, they are slaves to a pitiless law of labor that compels them to pass in a soul-destroying routine lives

that might be spent in a calm repose with only such activities as should elevate and beautify. A horrid dualism seems to exist between the actual human life on earth and the Paradise the world ought to be.

So long as men clung to the idea of a sudden act of creation by a being who could claim the reverence of his conscious creatures, they could not imagine such a creative act as anything but benevolent. The state of the first creation must have been such as was to be expected of a work "fresh from the hand of God." Hence man, as a part — the most important part — of this beneficent creation, must have begun in a state of perfection, and therefore, in order to reach the state of imperfection in which all tradition and observation shows him to be, he must have degenerated. This degeneration must have been either gradual or sudden. A gradual degeneration, which if accepted at all must be thought of as going on forever, so that man would appear as continually growing worse through all time, past, present, and future, was an unthinkable solution. Hence men came to the notion of a sudden change of nature, a "fall" from an original high estate into a condition of depravity.

The people most concerned, for our purpose the Hebrew people, were not seriously affected by this calamity. They saved themselves by the agreeable

doctrine of a special covenant with their God, whereby they became his chosen people, guaranteed in their future so long as they should keep themselves pure and faithful in his service. That covenant they maintained, often with serious shortcomings, but always called back to fidelity by some prophetic voice reminding them of their obligation and pointing them to their destiny. The Hebrew believed in an indefinite future of reunion with God under the leadership of a final prophet, whose promised coming was of value precisely as it remained a promise, beckoning the people toward an ever unfulfilled perfection of power and loyalty. They never set a definite point at which the fallen race was to be suddenly arrested in its doom and given a new impulse toward certain recovery of its original unity with God.

It was reserved for Christianity to take this step. Christian theology, elaborated through long conflict and under many influences that lay outside the range of Hebrew thought, drew the logical conclusion from the doctrine of a degenerate world and declared that by a specific act of divine compassion this fallen world was restored to its original harmony with its creator. The process of restoration was, to be sure, conditioned by certain demands upon the individual, but the crisis in human affairs was none the less marked and universal. The cycle of creation, fall, and recovery was complete.

With this accepted, Christian speculation went on to inquire into the cause. How should it account for the fact of a "fall"? Several possibilities were offered by the several theologies in the midst of which this speculation went on. It might have been dismissed briefly as a mere act of the arbitrary will of God, dictating to his creatures what they must do and suffer without reference to nearer causes. That way out, however, did not commend itself to the higher refinements of Græco-Egyptian-Roman subtlety as it played with the simple teaching of Jesus in a determined effort to bring it into harmony at once with Hebrew fable and with the laws of its own dialectic. On the basis of a single and uniform divine will it would have been impossible to work out a system of spasmodic creation, fall, and recovery that could command the intelligence and the conscience of the thinking and struggling Christian world.

A second device was to seek the cause of human depravity in the hostile activity of an independent Power, working in eternal antagonism to the great and beneficent design of God. Precedents for such an explanation were easily found in the existing systems of thought. The "Devil" was a familiar figure even in the late Hebrew speculation, and it is plain how great the temptation was to take him into the Christian scheme and give him a decisive part to play. He needed only to

be invested with powers sufficiently independent to make him a formidable rival to the creator God, and the thing was done. From this dualistic solution, however, the Christian consciousness shrank with instinctive dread. The Hebrew inheritance of unity saved it from so fatal a step. Dualism was formally rejected as the final solution of the human problem, and remained only in a multitude of secondary ideas that from point to point arose to plague the imagination of every age of discussion. The Devil, dethroned as the effective *cause* of man's defeat, lingered as the eager *agent* of his misery and his disharmony with the divine.

A third device to explain the working of the theological cycle brings us to our immediate problem of the unity of human nature. If the cause of man's "ruin" was to be found neither in the sole activity of God, because that seemed to imply some malevolent quality in the divine nature, nor in the action of a rival Power, because such rivalry seemed an infringement upon the dignity of God, it remained only to seek an explanation in some inherent quality of man's nature itself. That quality was found in the distinctions we have already noted between the several elements composing that nature. The "fall of man" was represented as a triumph of his material over his spiritual element. The story of the Book of Genesis was accepted as the divine con-

firmation of this duality of nature. The dualistic tendencies of thought, repudiated in their reference to the nature of God, found their expression in the doctrine of the nature of man. The thing which distinguished man from Deity on the one hand and from the brutes on the other, the possession of a highly developed, complex nature was declared by this theology to be the cause of his ruin. Man was the cause of his own destruction by virtue of being man. The very nature that was given him without his own desire was made the reason for his eternal incapacity to do right. Still more, this incapacity to do right was then charged against him as a fault. He was held responsible for a sin which he was *forced* to commit in consequence of the possession of a nature that was in itself "sinful." The definition of sin was stretched to cover not merely actions, but a state of being, an attitude, a tendency, without which man would not have been man, but something either infinitely higher or infinitely lower. The thought of the Church on this subject from the days of Augustine until now has been determined by the assumption of that fatal dualism in man which could be solved only by the intervention of some mysterious force not vitiated by the realities of human frailty.

The Unitarian thought of man goes at once to the root of this whole matter with its positive assertion of

the unity of human nature. It takes away from the idea of man all those dualisms which have puzzled and dismayed the theologians of all ages. It recognizes clearly the complexity of man's being, but it sees in this complexity only a community of powers, not an antagonism. The body is, from this point of view, not a thing to be ashamed of because it is not soul. Neither is the soul degraded because it is bound up with the marvellous mechanism of the body. The mind, acutely dependent as it is upon the body's well-being, cannot look with contempt upon its indispensable ally. Neither can the body, if it will attain its best development, afford to neglect the help it can constantly gain from the labor of the mind. Our day is conscious, as no other has been, of the part played by mental soundness in maintaining that physical health which in turn is the condition of active mental work. So greatly is our community inspired with these ideas of reciprocity between the several parts of human nature that many have elevated them into a religion, and indeed all religions are feeling profoundly the reaction of them upon their most cherished doctrines. The soul, in its striving after a right relation to God, is finding its chief aids in well-trained, well-nourished, and well-disciplined bodies and in equally well-informed, well-balanced, and disciplined minds. These tendencies of our day are

only the expression in other forms of ideas familiar to every Unitarian mind. They have come to the Unitarian consciousness as so many echoes of itself. They do not alarm it. Their crudenesses, their excesses, their follies even, cannot blind it to the essential comradeship of many of their fundamental ideas with its own. It sees, through their shabby decorations of prophets and prophetesses, revelations, inspirations, gospels, apostles, and all the familiar stage properties of fanaticism, the one great common possession of a faith in human nature. Like them in their sounder parts, Unitarianism believes in man's capacity to serve himself through the harmonious working together of those elements which theologians have thought of as warring against each other.

There is no more curious phenomenon of our time than these movements of masses of plain thinking people toward forms of religious expression in which the welfare of the body, in its relation to the life of the spirit, plays so important a part. They have been accompanied by inevitable excesses. Their pure motives have been mingled with others less able to bear the light of day. Their "science" has often been mere folly, and their social morality more than questionable. Yet they have served their generation and may serve it yet more by reminding men in these dramatic ways of that essential unity we are here considering. They have been bitterly

and rightly condemned for many of their practices and for not a few of their ideas. Even the best of them have been regarded as a danger to society, and legislation has been demanded to check their progress. In this attitude it will probably be found that Unitarians have taken little share. Probably, too, it would appear that they were not wholly conscious of the deeper reasons for their feeling on the subject. Yet, while the more strictly organized sects of Christians have viewed these modern movements with mingled horror and contempt, Unitarians have been willing to wait and see whither they might lead. Others have said: These outbreaks of human folly are only the successors of many others that have been since the Church began; as those earlier fanaticisms melted away or made their peace with the Church, so these are bound to do, and meanwhile the right thing is to point out their dangers and warn all sound-minded persons against them. But the natural Unitarian attitude is: These are, indeed, movements similar in many ways to scores of others that have preceded them; but for one thing, that alone would be evidence of a certain value; for we may be sure that nothing persists in this world unless it has some valuable content for humanity. And then again: it is not enough to say that those earlier movements merely vanished into thin air at the dictation of the

powers that were. On the contrary, it is precisely through these periodical outbreaks of the spirit of unrest, that the best life of the Church has been sustained and reinvigorated. To quench that spirit would be to reduce the thought of religion to a dead level of dull formality. Let it rather go on until its unworthy parts shall have been sloughed off and its worthy parts made to appear in their true value.

If this seems to be a digression from the main purpose of the present chapter, it is so only in so far as it concerns the outward aspect of the Unitarian attitude toward new presentations of possible truth. The inner kernel of the matter is the essential unity of man's nature as the key to his religious expression. On that point it may now be sufficiently clear that Unitarianism is ready to join in fellowship with every endeavor to found religion and morality on a harmony rather than on a dissonance among the elements of human nature.

If Unitarianism is disposed to be thus widely hospitable towards ideas and movements it does not approve, and from which it is bound to keep itself free, it is easily to be seen what would be its attitude toward others which more nearly approach its own essential spirit. If even pseudo science, so long as it is honest, seems worthy of a certain respect, how much more the labors and results of men working in a true scientific

spirit. When, a generation and more ago, all that vast clearing up of the mind took place to which we give, rather crudely, the name of the development theory, it was received by the world of dogmatic theology, professional and lay alike, with the utmost hesitation and dread. An immense fraction, perhaps a majority, of Christian men even to-day reject it with a certain horror. Somehow the notion that mankind came into existence gradually instead of suddenly seems to imply a reproach against the very idea of God; as if a God working by rational causes were less worthy of respect than one working by spasmodic effort. The mere application of a scientific method to religious questions had and has of itself a certain suggestion of blasphemy. "Can man by searching find out God?" If it was said that the origin of man is not a religious but a scientific problem, the reply was that the two could not here be separated, and therefore the only safety lay in checking at once so dangerous a process.

Now, in this feeling of alarm at the advance of physical science Unitarianism from the first did not greatly share. It perceived instinctively that the ideas involved in the notion of development were fundamentally akin to its own. Its reception of this new key to the problem of life was prompt and hearty. Even long before the general consciousness of the modern world had come

by various processes to adjust itself to this new way of thinking about the origins of human life, many Unitarians had accepted it and taken the consequences. Here again they were not alarmed by extremes. There were indeed, for the moment, voices raised in the ancient cry that now at last God was banished from the world, and life, human as well as the rest, was reduced to a thing of tissues and cells, generation and decay. The answer of the theologians in general was to proclaim once more, and more emphatically, their doctrine of the divided nature. The soul must still be thought of as something separate, put into the body from the outside at some moment of its production, and therefore, of course, exempt from the working of "natural" law.

Unitarians caught at once the clue to the whole matter. The principle of unity must work here as everywhere else. The harmony of soul and body must be as true under one theory of origin as another. So far as the ultimate question of the beginning of life was concerned it could not matter. No human theory could touch that; for by its very definition the life principle eludes and always will elude the last analysis of science. No sane scientist expects or even desires to find it. He sees that its discovery would from the first moment result in the destruction of the system of things with which

he has to deal. His ambition is bounded within the circle of phenomena offered to him by the world as it is, and he makes no claims to occult wisdom of any sort. The Unitarian is content to follow the modesty of the true scientist. He rejoices in every revelation of the working of natural law, because, as a religious being, he feels in every increase of knowledge also an increase of faith in the things that mean most to him. The limitations of science no more disturb him than they do the scientist himself. An impatient scientist would go mad, and it is a sign of sanity in thought when men fairly and frankly recognize the limits of their vision and refuse to invent explanations of unexplainable things. It is true that science has not solved the riddle of existence. It never will; it makes no claim to do so; but it has given to serious, independent, and rational thought about the conditions of existence a hundred new supports. Above all it has wonderfully helped to make clear the unity of human nature as a part of the unity of all life. If we are alarmed lest by the scientific process the soul be reduced to a matter of quickened heart-beats, or irregular nerve-stimulation, or a succession of unconscious habits, we are at liberty at any moment to translate all these fine things back again into the language of the spiritual life, and there we have it once more, after all, — the "soul," as mysterious

as ever, as independent of conscious control, yet linked inseparably, as we knew it was before, to the material body it at once serves and is served by. The feeling of Unitarians in regard to the whole question of the relation of faith and knowledge, to which we must often refer, has no better illustration than in this matter of the nature of man as a unit. It is inconceivable that any honest fact of science should contradict any worthy motion of the spiritual life. Science may modify faith, may give it new forms of expression, will certainly supply it with many new illustrations, but it can never make untrue what was once true.

Historically the Unitarian view of human nature has its foundations far back in the early ages of Christian controversy. In fact, what proved to be the dominant belief of formal Christianity, the Augustinian doctrine of a fallen nature in antagonism with God and hence needing a "scheme" of reconciliation, this "orthodoxy" of the creeds was brought into form largely through its resistance to another conception known generally as the "Pelagian." Without going into the refinements of that ancient, yet still fresh and living, controversy, we may restate the essential point of it as follows. Man, according to the Pelagian view, was conceived of as a being brought into the world with a nature which of itself was in harmony with the divine order. True, the

first man suffered a "fall," but this was in consequence of a wrong decision of his will and did not produce in his offspring the loss of will-power toward right action — that is, action in harmony with the will of God. The soul of every new-born man is, like that of the first man, a *tabula rasa* on which he and he alone is to write the record of success and failure which makes up the story of every human life. Some men go right and some go wrong, but none goes wholly right or wholly wrong. Whether a man becomes a good man or a bad man depends upon the balance of his choices. The habit of good living helps toward further good and equally the habit of evil begets further ill-doing. So, without doubt, the habit of choice is inherited, and the son of the good man has an advantage in the struggle for good. In this sense it is possible to say that good and evil are hereditary, but only in this sense. *Non possum non habere possibilitatem boni* — nothing can deprive me of the power of right action. The possibility of doing right, freedom of the will and hence moral responsibility and hence praise- or blame-worthiness, this is the series of qualities on which the Pelagian definition of man is based. Of course the terminology of this ancient discussion was absolutely determined by the habit of the time. It involved the whole Hebrew assumption of sudden creation, of first parents,

of good and evil as entities, of fall and subsequent restoration. It needs translating into the scientific language of our time, but so translated it gives fairly well the most important elements of Unitarian thought. Man, complex but normally harmonious in his nature, is what he is by reason of a rational and normal development from the simple, primal impulses of self-preservation to the most complicated, but not on that account the less natural, processes of a highly organized individual and social existence.

The Unitarian is aware that in thus simplifying and unifying the definition of man, he is leaving open still the chasm that divides man from all other rational beings. He realizes that the instinct of the highest brutes is different from the conscious reason of man. He perceives in man a moral idealism of which so far no such positive evidence has been found in the brute as to command general acceptance by careful observers. The conscious social purpose that directs so large a part of man's activity finds only apparent counterparts in the aggregations of animal life.

But, in the first place, the chasm has been narrowing perceptibly as we have learned more and more of the mental processes both of men and of animals. We have learned to think far more respectfully of our humble companions as we have studied more carefully

and with more open minds the working of their powers most nearly akin to our own. The range of illustration of actions on their part obviously directed towards a desired end — even towards ends that must be new to their race experience — has been greatly increased: the horse freeing himself from a halter-strap fastened in a novel way, or untying knots with his teeth, or worrying the lock of a grain bin until he can lift the lid, or drawing his bedding within reach by unusual movements of his foot; the dog obviously planning in advance some action to make himself comfortable or to gratify some pet whim; not to mention those marvellous performances of memory which might perhaps more easily be disposed of as merely instinctive — the squirrel recovering food buried months before over a widely extended field, the dog or the cat finding its way over hundreds of miles of road it had travelled but once before, — all these and many that might be added must give us pause in any absolute conclusion as to lack of conscious mental power in the brute. In fact so credulous has our time become in these matters that many highly cultivated minds have been willing to accept utterly impossible tales about "mathematical horses," "psychological dogs," and other marvels of human training. It is even a little humiliating to a mere human being to consider his inferiority in so

many respects to his "inferior" cousins — the wonderful foot and tail of the ape, the scent of the hound, the eye of the eagle; above all, that amazing sixth sense of direction, which we have entirely lost, but which seems to guide so many movements of animal life.

It might be possible to go even further and to discover in many animals at least a rudimentary conscience. The well-trained dog resists temptation under trying circumstances in a way to shame the conscience of average humanity. If we say this is mere fear of punishment inspired by the memory of past experiences, how large a part of the sensitiveness of most human consciences is made up of the same degrading but highly educative emotion? Is the difference, after all, one of degree rather than of kind? If we compare the lowest man with the highest brute, the process of transition seems not only possible but inevitable.

Even the social instinct which binds men together in so many varieties of activity seems not wholly lacking in animals. Sometimes it appears in common efforts apparently directed to some well-considered end, sometimes in what seems like the voluntary subjection of many to the guidance of one. The brute family has often startling resemblances to that family life which is the germ of the human state. It is easy to believe, as many have done, that some animals are really organized

socially into an actual political body with its officials, its laws, and its punishments.

Thus the chasm that divides man from the lower, or let us rather say from the other, forms of organized life has been narrowing. The marvels of comparative anatomy, especially the studies of embryonic life, have shown us how the several functions of the individual, man or beast or plant, are differentiated out of primordial cells so similar that they cannot be distinguished. So also what is true of the individual is true of the race. The varieties of man, no less than the varieties of other animals and plants, are shown as the result of processes that can largely be traced as "natural" and inevitable. The chasm has been greatly narrowed, but it still remains; for so far as we can see there is nothing in any being except man even remotely corresponding to the religious sense as we have defined it — that is, as a positive and conscious reaching out of the human soul towards invisible powers outside itself, that influence its action and to which it owes some kind of responsibility.

It is the certainty that, no matter how far science may go, it can never touch this supreme distinction of man that makes the Unitarian so naturally and so completely free from any dread whatever as to the effect of further knowledge upon man's religious nature.

That nature he regards as so absolutely a part of man that even when men take the greatest pains to deny it, he, the Unitarian, sees in such denial only those temporary and local aberrations to which all ideas are subject. Denial of the religious nature touches only some of the imperfect forms and expressions under which religion has disguised itself. The forms change, the expressions are modified, but the great current of religious life moves on in spite of all checks and diversions.

It follows quite naturally from this view of the individual as a being capable of good action, *i.e.* action in harmony with the will of God, that all mankind is equally included in the divine order. The Unitarian sees no possible distinction in essence or in possibility of the highest spiritual attainment between the "highest" and the "lowest" families of men upon the earth. Whatever may be the "divine plan" for man's existence here or heareafter — and as to this plan the Unitarian professes a modest uncertainty — it must include *all* men. There can be no inside and outside to the great estate wherein the children of men are invited to dwell. No matter how vast the distance that seems to separate the "higher" from the "lower" stages of human development, the road travelled by each branch of the human family on its upward way is essentially

the same. All march by the same stations of increasing economic demand and supply. All are subject to the law of social morality, no matter in how diverse forms it may manifest itself. In all the same religious impulse reaches out into the unknown and seeks to establish relations with it. The same law which makes the Unitarian feel in the individual an essential harmony working itself out through continuous struggle, makes him also feel in mankind as a whole an essential unity expressing itself under infinitely diverse forms. The "plan of salvation," given as generous a definition as is humanly thinkable, must be for all men. Nor is it, in the thought of Unitarians, essential that the process of "salvation" be similar in detail for all men or for men in all ages. If there must be an historic word to express the thing they understand by "salvation," they prefer the word "justification." Not that either of these words plays any considerable part in their ordinary vocabulary; but "justification" carries an idea that appeals naturally to their imagination. We shall have to return to this idea in its proper place; enough here to say that from the Unitarian thought about the unity of mankind, there follows naturally the notion of justification, *i.e.* the "right" relation of the human soul to God as something progressive in time and something varied in form. The Unitarian is able to con-

ceive of the "lowest" type of the human worshipper as being quite as really justified in view of his stage of development as is the most orthodox of civilized church members judged by the possibilities of the society in which he lives. Nay, he is not sure but that the honest Polynesian goes down to his house justified rather than that other.

The statement of the historic, "Pelagian," Unitarian view of human nature includes the idea of the freedom of the human will. It cannot be supposed that the Unitarian should have reached the ultimate solution of a philosophic problem that has puzzled the wisest of the world's thinkers from the beginning until now. If he were even to undertake such a solution he would be ranging himself with the philosophers, not with the seekers after religious satisfaction; and he confesses himself in the class of these, not of those. He does not seek to solve the problem; he aims only to take an attitude towards it. He faces it with a due sense of its difficulty, but without dread; for his notion of a God is free from any taint of the awful cruelty of a law imposed upon man so hard that his own essential nature makes it impossible for him to obey it.

Like every other thinker upon the problem of the human will, the Unitarian finds himself between two extremes: the *liberum arbitrium* of the Pelagians and the

arbitrium servum of Augustine, of Luther, and of Calvin. If he were called upon to choose absolutely between these extremes, there is no doubt whatever as to his choice. He would accept the Pelagian horn of the dilemma and take the consequences. That is the side toward which all his natural instincts and the whole logic of his presuppositions inevitably lead him. His first impulse would be to declare: "My will is free. I know it because I am myself, and every part of me proclaims that without this supreme endowment I should be only the echo, the instrument, the shadow of something other than myself. It is this gift of freedom that creates my sense of right and wrong; for without liberty I should have no responsibility; without responsibility I should lose everything that makes my actions worthy of being described as right or wrong; and if I may not be rewarded in any sense for my good action, what conceivable motive is there for me to be good? I am conscious of a moral law laid upon me. That is a fact from which I cannot escape. But now, a God who would impose upon me a moral law which He had made me essentially incapable of obeying would be to me an unthinkable monster."

And yet, no sooner has he thus clearly formulated his absolute demand for the freedom of his will, than like all his predecessors he becomes conscious of a certain

weakness in it. Quite as imperative as the claim of liberty is that other consciousness of a will greater than his own. He knows that he is free to act; he cannot conceive of life without such freedom. But at the same moment he knows equally that his own individual life is but a part in a greater whole. The law of his being is a fragment of the greater law by which the whole creation moves. If he cannot conceive of a man except as master of his will, no more can he conceive of a universe except as governed in all its parts by one all-directing principle. In that universe man is a part. He must therefore be subject to that other power not himself that guides the universe and him with it.

The older theologies in reaching this point helped themselves out by various devices. Sometimes they said: "Yes, man's will is free indeed, but it is free only to do evil! If a man believe himself to be doing right, to be acting, that is, in harmony with the divine will, he is deceiving himself. His actions, so far as they proceed from his own natural impulses, are evil, *i.e.* they are in opposition to the divine will, and they can be brought into harmony with it only through some process foreign to their own real nature."

Sometimes the theologies of the past said: "Yes, the will of man is free, but only in such things as pertain to the ordinary dealings of daily life (*justitia civilis*).

In all that deals with the life of the spirit, man's will can do naturally only evil. To do good, it must be specifically assisted, even 'prevented,' by an act of divine power from without." Or, again, they tried to bring these two agencies, the natural will of man and the effective grace of God, into coöperation, like partners in business, as it were, in a purely external and unreconciled combination. When this was done the share of the human was reduced to its lowest terms, so that the preponderance of the divine control might be saved to its utmost limit.

No one of these devices is satisfactory to the Unitarian. To say that man's will is free only to do evil seems to him to be the same thing as saying that it is not free at all. To make a distinction between the righteousness shown in one's dealings with one's fellowmen in everyday affairs and that which governs man in his relations to God, seems to him to be drawing a fictitious line of separation between things that essentially belong together. *Justitia civilis* is to him only another manifestation of the *justitia divina*, which is at once its standard and its source. So, again, the attempt to fix by any rational process the proportion between the human element and the divine in man's action seems to him an idle waste of energy. He can conceive of no point at which the human will could either begin

or cease to be free or to be controlled by the divine will.

What, then, is the Unitarian thought on this most intricate of all problems? It is not a philosophical solution; it is a religious and a moral conclusion. It accepts the freedom of the human will, because otherwise it cannot conceive of human nature at all. At the same time it tries so to define the human will that it shall appear as itself a part of that divine plan to which it has so often been represented as in opposition. The part cannot be in essential opposition to the whole, any more than a wheel in a great mechanism can be hostile to the whole. It may be an imperfect wheel; it may be injured; it may be badly fitted to the rest; it may need oiling, but essentially it must work with all the other parts in harmony towards the desired end. It cannot be so geared that it shall work backward instead of forward. The Unitarian finds his satisfaction in the thought that his will is given him by the same Power that directs the universe and that it must therefore be essentially good. He regrets its weakness; he confesses and deplores its shortcomings. It has sometimes gone wrong in the past, and he is sure that it will sometimes go wrong in the future. Yet he knows that all the real satisfactions of his life have come through this same despised will, — his victories over

the temptations of ease and power and lust; his sacrifices of immediate gratification for remote satisfaction; his silent endurance of scorn and pain and misunderstanding — all these he traces to the activity of this will, that at every point has determined his choice and so helped to fix his character for good. These victories of his will he does not think of as wholly victories over self; for when he tries to define his self, he finds his will as essentially a part of it, and the best part at that. As he reads the pathetic parable of the spendthrift youth, he finds its kernel in the words, "He came to *himself*." It was the discovery of the real self in him that led to his recovery, and it was his own will that lifted him up and set him on his feet and led him back into his father's house.

No, the Unitarian cannot set his will over against himself as a separate thing, which may upon occasion go into opposition to him. If his will is strong, *he* is strong; if his will is weak, *he* is weak. With it he himself turns toward good or towards evil, and it is only through his will that these words "good" and "evil" have any meaning for him. In any case his will is his own, and what he does by it cannot be reckoned to the account of any one else. To charge his weakness upon any other being or series of beings is a base evasion. To ascribe his strength wholly to any power outside

himself is equally an uncalled-for reflection upon the human nature he bears. It is impossible to put the Unitarian point of view into any better words than these:

> "Our wills are ours — we know not how.
> Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

My will is my own, though I do not care to go into the question how I came by it. It is my very own; and yet it is not a treasure which I am at liberty to throw away or to diminish. It is my own only under the condition that I make it also a part of that greater Will by which all the harmonies of the world are maintained and by which the perpetual struggle that is the law of life is guided towards a final harmony. That is the religious and moral conclusion to which the Unitarian is led by every instinct of his nature and by the rational working of his mind. The vexed problem of the human will is solved for him, as far as it ever can be solved, by maintaining the integrity of the will in both its aspects. His will is free, because its freedom is essential to that independence which is the mark of manhood. Yet at the same time it is bound by a law which is also essential to his definition of a man; for there is not, and by this definition never has been, a race of men without a higher law than that of mere self-preservation. Below that line we place by common

consent the world of animals. When that line is passed, and not till then, we may properly use the name "man." With the passing of that line also man came into his right as the possessor of a will leading him to acts for which he owns his responsibility.

It has been necessary for us to use repeatedly the words "good" and "evil" without trying to give them any precise definition. Yet the conception which must underlie any such definition is one of the most important elements in all Unitarian thought. Here again one is forced by the facts of the case into a negative way of putting it. Throughout the earlier theologies there runs the notion of good and evil as entities in themselves. Especially was this the case with the idea of evil. If, as always predicated, God was essentially good, then in order to account for the presence of evil in the world there must be over against him a something else, antagonistic to him and working throughout nature and life in continual opposition to him. Christian theology was profoundly influenced by the fundamental dualism prevailing in many forms in religions with which it came into contact. It was, perhaps, more keenly alive to the dangers arising from this source than to any others. It did its best to get rid of every trace of dualism in its confessions of faith. It rejected with horror the notion of an eternal principle of evil all but equal with God,

which continually threatened its own doctrine of the divine unity. The word "Manichean," which, under its many forms, stood for dualistic ideas whenever and wherever they appeared, was one of its favorite words of reproach. Its greatest teacher, Augustine the African, who from being a follower of the Græco-Roman divinities had found his way into orthodox Christianity through the gateway of Manicheism, spent a lifetime in fighting that dualism which had, after all, been to him a training school for Christian philosophy. He and his successors through the centuries did their best; but when all was done the fact remained that a dualistic shading had been given to Christian thought from which it never quite recovered. All its protestations could not do away with the notion of a *real* principle of evil, generally embodied in a personal figure, but in any case a reality. The Catholic Church retained the idea, in spite of its broadly human interpretations of it, and in the great Protestant revivals of every age these figures of an evil one as the author and maintainer of sin became popular in the extreme.

Throughout these discussions on this most interesting because most personally vital of all religious questions, we can trace a continuous protest against the reality of evil; but an idea which requires so much protesting is sure to be an idea with a pretty vigorous

life in it. In spite of the protests of theologians the personal devil as the embodiment of the reality of evil held his own. Whether he were an object of dread or of derision or of the two together, the consciousness of the Christian world was impressed with the reality of the thing he represented as with hardly any other idea.

Unitarianism begins its thought on this subject by squarely denying the reality of evil — not, be it well understood, the fact of evil; for to deny that is simply playing with words. By reality is meant here, so far as plain language can express it, what the philosophers mean in their distinction between the "real" and the "ideal," — the real being that which has an independent existence of its own, not merely an existence as related to something else. In that sense of the word the Unitarian asserts positively the relative nature of evil. Evil is itself a negation, and a negation cannot have real existence. "Evil" is only the opposite of "good." It exists in the world only as shadows exist where the sunlight fails to reach. As the light moves, the shadows vanish into the nothingness they really are. Moreover, as shadows are lighter or heavier according as the sun's rays approach them, so that there is in Nature no such thing as a perfect shadow, so it is also with the evil of the world. It lurks in every corner because around that corner the sun of goodness is

shining clear; were there no good there would be no evil. The depth of evil depends, like the depth of shadows, upon the remoteness of the goodly sun and upon the angle at which it enters the recesses of human experience. Some souls appear to be all great luminous fields, like the landscapes of a modern painter, filled through and through with an almost unearthly light. Some are like a forest scene of Ruysdael, where shadows lie heavy in among rocks and trees and even in the sombre play of dashing water. The painter works somewhat like the theologian. To produce his effects he deals more with his shadows than with his lights. If he can get the shadows right, the lights will take care of themselves. So it has been with theology. It has emphasized the dark places, because these were what it could deal with most readily and most tangibly. The good that was in the world and in men could do without emphasis or definition.

It is precisely at this point that Unitarianism approaches the problem of good and evil. It recognizes frankly the fact of evil, but it changes the emphasis from the dark side to the bright. In so far as it needs a definition of evil it seeks it through a definition of good; for the negative can be defined only through the positive. Now Unitarian thought finds its idea of good in that same principle of harmony we have already dis-

covered to be one of its chief foundations. It frankly gives up from the start all attempt to define an absolute Good. Such attempts, useful enough to the philosopher, have no place in the practical search after religious satisfaction. It desires rather a definition of good that can be expressed in terms intelligible to us plain struggling mortals who demand clearness in our thinking and an uplift in our efforts towards a higher life.

"Good" means to the Unitarian mind that which is in harmony with the will of God. The form of expression does not greatly matter. Some would prefer to say, "in harmony with the law by which the universe is governed," because they are afraid of using words that might be misunderstood. The intention is the same. In any case the definition needs some further elaboration and especially as to the question how we are to know the good; for obviously it is idle to lay down an abstract conception if we cannot recognize it in the concrete case.

"Good," then, is certainly not that which happens to please *us*. Probably no definition of good has ever been more natural or more popular than this. If my crops succeed, if my ambitions are realized, my friends are true, my loves returned, and my hatreds avenged, then, says the voice of common humanity, this is a good world. I live in a smug contentment with myself, and

the universe takes its natural and proper place in my thought as the duly appointed minister to my happiness. If the opposite of all these things happens, if my strength fails, if my enemies prosper, and my friends grow lukewarm, — then the world is evil and I am the victim of a subtle fate which I am and have been powerless to control. Such a view as this springs naturally from a notion of man which places him at the centre of the universe and the individual man at the centre of humanity, so that everything stands related to him and is to be defined and interpreted only in this relation. It is like the ancient notion that our planet the earth, simply because we do it the honor to live upon it, must be the center and all-sufficient end of creation. It took many generations of men to get far enough away from this notion so that their priesthoods would refrain from burning those who dared to believe that our own particular planet was only one member of a system, all of whose members were equally dependent upon one central sun.

And so it has been and still is with the notion of good as that which pleases the individual. It has been derided by philosophers, condemned by theologians, combated by moralists. Yet there it is to-day one of the most natural instincts of the human heart. The reason for this is that the elder theologies spoiled their

own efforts to get rid of it by failing to supply a rational background for their teaching, and it is here that Unitarians believe themselves to be in a better position. The notion of an individual standard of good vanishes into thin air the moment it is brought into contact with a view of life as governed by a universal law, just as the notion of a central earth, long suspected by thinking men, vanished when it met the theory of a planetary system governed by a universal law of gravitation.

This background of universal law is the very foundation of Unitarian thought. It supplies at once what is needed to show the weakness and the folly of imagining that our own personal standard of good as advantage to ourselves is a sound guide. It gives us a measure of its pettiness, its unsteadiness, and its insufficiency. It enables us to grasp the higher loyalty that holds us to great things and sets us free from the tyranny of little things. It compels us, once for all, to drop the struggle for small satisfactions, — the keeping of our bodies warm and cool, fed and rested, the saving of our minds from grave responsibilities, the evasion of high demands upon our sacrifice and our charity. It shows us that all these forms of self-satisfaction are good only in so far as they fit us better for the greater stress of life. The question as to what is pleasing to us is

lost in the larger question whether we ourselves are pleasing in the sight of Him who is our law, of that Law which is our highest standard, the rule and measure of our experience.

But if we may not measure goodness by the standard of our own personal consciousness, our next impulse as social beings would be to seek a standard in the society to which we belong. May there not be some criterion of good in its experience as a whole? Certainly we should be moving here upon a road that would lead to nobler ideas. Something of personal pettiness would be gone, and we should be breathing a higher air. We may well say that in the law of the state, for example, we have a collective expression of the things most desirable for the community as a whole. Whatever conforms to this public law must then be "good," so far at least as that community is concerned. So in the decrees of the Church we have a record of the common agreement of men on what it is best to do and think within the range of faith and morals. May we not say here also that whatever the Church decrees for its members must represent to them the highest good? So, also, apart from these organisations, human society cries out to us with varied voices of appeal or of reproof. It begs us to relieve its poverty, to break its oppressions, to enlighten its ignorance, to comfort its distress,

to widen the bounds of its liberty. Are not these the measures of the highest good?

There is much in all these forms of collective demand to make men content with the ideals of good which they suggest. If we faithfully obey the laws of the state, respect the teaching of the Church, and lend a ready ear to the calls of human need, why are we not conforming to the highest standards of goodness? The answer lies, as in the case of the individual, in the shifting motive of the standards here presented. They may be right in the given case or they may be wrong. The law of the state has as often served the cause of brutality and oppression as it has maintained justice and furthered liberty. The social teachings of religion have as often helped to keep men in darkness as they have opened to them the ways of light. The inarticulate cries of the multitude have led into fantastic excesses as often as they have pointed the way to real and permanent service.

"Good" is neither that which seems most agreeable to the individual nor is it that which conforms to the standards of social demand. Where then shall we find its definition? We have already declared our inability to grasp the idea of the Absolute Good. If we knew that, we should be gods, not men. Indeed, wherever in these reflections we come to the notion of the Absolute,

we shall frankly confess our limitation and withdraw into the region of the humanly possible. The Unitarian can go no farther than the definition with which we began: "That is good which is in harmony with the universal law." But how is this definition to be applied? Certainly we do not know the universal law, and how then are we to know whether the given thought, feeling, action, is in harmony with it.

The Unitarian answer to this is: we know in the given case whether the thing that seems good is really so through the certain witness of the enlightened individual conscience, and in no other way. At first this may seem to contradict what we have said as to the insufficiency of the individual standard of goodness; but the contradiction is only apparent. In what was said before we were speaking only of what appealed to our sense of personal comfort, convenience, pleasure, or even, in some lower sense of that great word, to our "happiness." Now we are not referring to that kind of satisfaction at all. We are in another region of spiritual experience. On that lower stage the individual appears as isolated from all other forms of being. He is his own sufficient end and aim. He is in a kind of antagonism or rivalry with every one and everything. If he is warm, it matters not to him that others are cold. If he have power, it is a small thing that hun-

dreds are compelled to serve him in slavery or in soul-destroying labor. If his desire is sated, it cannot matter that women's hearts are broken and children brought into misery. His "good" is others' pain. That kind of individual standard is mere egoism, and we are all united in condemning it.

But there is a higher individualism, free throughout from this reproach. The individual can discern real good only as he brings himself into right relation with everything else, and the medium through which he sees this relation is what we have called his enlightened conscience. As to a definition of conscience there would not, probably, be any very great difference among reasonable men. Conscience is that inner witness which testifies to the rightness or the wrongness of our thoughts and our actions. It may or it may not be possible to verify its conclusions by a rational process. These conclusions may or may not agree with the formal rules of our social order. They may or they may not be in accord with the teachings of our Bibles and our priesthoods. Fortunate, indeed, the man appears to be whose conscience runs in pleasant harmony with these easily understood guides of life. He has only to work his syllogisms, to consult his neighbor, and to read his Bible judiciously, to keep himself and his conscience always on excellent terms.

But if these outward witnesses fail, if reason will not furnish a satisfactory conclusion, if society frowns, if Scripture will not let itself be twisted into conformity — still conscience stands unshaken. The individual may suffer; he may cry out in his pain, "If only I might see a way out of my distress! if only others would support me! if only the recorded wisdom of the Past would come to my aid!" but so long as that does not happen, conscience must still remain supreme lord of his being. He can only say: "I cannot do otherwise. God help me!" and take the consequences.

That is conscience as, probably, most fair-minded men would define it. But no sooner have we reached this definition than we begin to feel how much it needs examination. After all, is this imperious master of our destiny so utterly to be trusted? Is its standard an absolute one, so that whatever it tells us at any moment, we may be sure that is "good" and its opposite is "evil"? Or, on the other hand, if conscience may change, what may properly be the influences that may produce such change? The answer to this inevitable puzzle is found in the phrase, "the enlightened conscience." Some might prefer to say the "educated" or the "disciplined" conscience; but these words seem to imply some conscious training of the conscience in a specific direction, and that is an implication we ought

especially to avoid. By the "enlightened" conscience we mean one that, while it yields nothing of its lordship over the individual life, is yet open to every worthy suggestion from without. Each such influence it must try before the tribunal of its own best judgment, whether it be of good or of evil. Then, if it be approved, it will enter into the very substance of conscience itself, modifying its standards, but making them no less imperative. The enlightened conscience seeks light everywhere and responds to it as all brightness reflects the light.

The enlightenment of the conscience defends it, in the first place, from itself. Every one knows the type of person we call "too conscientious." Properly speaking, that is a false term. No one can be too conscientious in the sense of following conscience too strictly. The fault in these cases is not in the following but in the conscience itself. It has become warped or it has been terrorized or deceived. The conscience may prey upon itself, shutting itself away from every influence and driving its victim around in a vicious circle of ideas from which he would, but cannot, extricate himself. Such a conscience may well be called rather puzzled than enlightened. It is keen, but it cuts in wrong directions. A man under its influence imagines himself to be "consistent" and prides himself upon this. He has

long since laid down some rule of action, which at the moment he believed right, and from this rule he will not depart — he will not touch alcohol, he will sleep only so many hours in the day, he will set apart so much of his income for charity, he will not accept a gift from a friend, lest he incur an obligation he cannot pay. These things once seemed to him supremely important and so he will still observe them. He overlooked the certainty of growth in himself, and of change in all his surroundings, and now, when he has grown and things about him have changed, and he sees with the best part of him that these obligations are fictitious, still he will not shake them off. He shuts out the light of experience and reason and keeps on in the shadows of what he and others call his conscience, doing weak and foolish things and all the while growing less capable of making useful distinctions of motive. The enlightenment of the conscience defends it thus from itself. Without it the conscience may prey upon itself and so become really ineffective.

Again, as enlightenment protects a man against what seems a too keen sense of conscience, so, on the other hand, it defends him against its fatal dulness. Every honest man must confess to moments when, having long striven to uphold the standard of right living, he feels a doubt whether, after all, it is worth while. The doubt

admitted grows into a habit; conscience, that had guided him safely so far, ceases to admonish him, and he moves towards a catastrophe. Such wreck of conscience could be averted if the man were able to see in time that conscience was only another expression of the highest reasonableness. He has let it go because it seemed to him to contradict those other teachings of experience and of reason which have come to mean more to him. If he had been able to set his conscience in the light of all that seemed to him best worth while in life, so that it would have been brought into harmony with all this instead of remaining in opposition to it, then he might have saved himself.

It will be objected to these suggestions that they point toward an evident obscuring of the special function of conscience, that they tend to efface all distinction between conscience and reason. Following this line of thought, it will be said, a man might reason himself into anything, so that enlightenment of the conscience ought rather to be called perversion of the conscience. There is obvious force in these objections. The tribunal of conscience does not act by precise codes and statistics, for which page and number may be quoted. It gives its decisions according to a larger equity, which does not admit of precise definition in advance, and the work of equity is obviously more diffi-

cult than that of formal law. It is true that the enlightenment of the conscience is often dangerous, but so is every other struggle of human nature that is worth while.

It is because of the Unitarian's faith in the capacities of human nature that he is willing to take the risk of committing himself to the guidance of the enlightened conscience in his effort to distinguish the highest good. He knows that in the process there are likely to be moments when the conscience will be puzzled into confusion and other moments when it will be in danger of perversion, but he believes that on the whole the honest struggle for a true enlightenment will be successful. He does not think of this struggle as a misfortune. He sees in it the inevitable law of all being, the condition of progress and the discipline of all a man's powers. To state it once more, the Unitarian believes that to be good which is in harmony with the eternal law of the universe, and he believes that this harmony can be discerned by the safe witness of the enlightened conscience and in no other way. He does not imagine that by this process a system of rules could be evolved which the untrained will could follow. Rather, he believes that from moment to moment the disciplined conscience discovers its way, and this often the most surely when it can give least accurate account of its own processes.

The ultimate verdict of the soul so guided must always be, "I know this to be good because, being the thing I am, I cannot see it otherwise. It is good to me because I am myself."

Man remains thus, to the Unitarian, a being, all of whose manifold capacities are normally planned to work together in harmony with each other and with the universe of law in which he is a part. We may not without peril try to separate between body, mind, heart, and soul in making our image of man as a religious being. This conception of man enables the Unitarian to face with entire calmness and certainty of ultimate satisfaction all the efforts of a true science to point out the place of man in the scheme of things. Whatever proves to be true, that we need not fear, and the only way to reach truth is to try. Man is, furthermore, a creature with a will of his very own, — none the less his own because it is limited by the greater law about him. In adjusting his will to the higher will of God he finds the supreme challenge of his moral nature to that action which is the chief glory of his manhood. Finally, to guide his will in action, he relies upon the ultimate authority of that enlightened conscience in which he finds the highest certificate of his value as a co-worker in the business of the universe. The Unitarian believes that a being so constructed must neces-

sarily become a religious being, and his concern is to define as well as he can the religion that best conforms to this idea of human nature. Religion thus seems to him not something imposed upon man from the outside, but something developed from within, the natural and inevitable expression of man's nature. Only so can it have for him either interest or value.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIBLE

> One accent of the Holy Ghost
> The heedless world hath never lost.
>
> — *R. W. Emerson.*

It would be hard to describe the thought of Unitarians about the Bible in language essentially different from that which would be employed to-day by the more intelligent members of other Christian bodies. What were, a generation ago, rather startling propositions as to the nature and origin of the writings contained in the two canons have now become the commonplaces of all freely thinking men. In stating, therefore, the Unitarian position on this subject one must include much that is not by any means peculiar to it. So far as these matters are concerned, Unitarians rejoice to find so wide agreement with their views, and can claim for themselves only a more fearless and consistent application of them. Beyond the range of this common view, however, they think they see and feel certain wider horizons which it is the object of the present chapter to suggest.

The Unitarian sees in the Bible two collections of

writings having with each other mainly this connection: that the writers of the second, being Hebrews, referred back naturally and frequently to the first. In that first collection was contained the literary expression of the national and religious life of the Hebrew people. It gave them their history, their poetry, and their law. The writings it comprised were the survival, by a law of the fittest, from centuries of literary activity. They had inspired the patriotism, the unity, the persistence, the genius, of the race. They had entered into its consciousness as, probably, the literature of no other race has done — unless it be, perhaps, that of the related Semitic Arabs. In the absence of the plastic arts they had satisfied their æsthetic sense upon its splendid imagery and nourished their energy of the day by continual draughts from its store of great examples in their national past. It was impossible for the Hebrew, when he desired to express himself on the great questions of religion or of racial hope, not to draw his language from this inexhaustible storehouse of material familiar to every listener.

That is reason enough for the countless references in the New Testament to the great classic collection of the Old. That and the common racial temperament are sufficient also to account for the obvious similarity in tone between the two collections. But when this

has been said, pretty much all has been said that can be brought forward for the unity of the two. Our editions of the Bible have so accustomed us to the impression of unity that it costs us a considerable effort to shake it off. We know with our intelligence that Moses cannot have written the account of his own death, and yet we can never quite escape the deadening effect of those fatal editorial headlines to our translation, in which the Old Testament writers are made to refer to the events and persons of the New. It is as if a spell had been cast upon us from which we were even yet unable to awake. Jesus, the Apostles, the Church, are made, in this vague, uncertain light, to appear as characters in the drama of Hebrew race development, rather than as factors in a new and upward movement of humanity. When Isaiah, in a moment of prophetic exaltation, breaks out into the language of confident prediction of a great personal leadership for Israel, we imagine him to have seen a vision of the cradle at Bethlehem. In the light of later events every available word and phrase of the ancient literature has been tortured out of its proper meaning and made to appear as a definite prediction.

It has been almost in vain that scholars of every creed and of no creed have shown the futility of such imaginings. The common consciousness of Christendom

still suffers from this unhistorical way of approaching historical fact. It is still necessary to remove this first fundamental obstacle before we can go on to any rational consideration of the Bible as a whole. One is tempted sometimes to regret that this body of literature was ever presented to the world as a unit, and certainly all praise is to be given to those who in their several ways have contributed to a juster method of approach to it. The abolition of artificial and arbitrary paragraphs and chapters, the separation of the Old from the New Testament, the publication of the various books in separate volumes, the endless critical examinations into the probable age of every writing and the probable process of its composition, — all these are welcome, and they have had their effect. Yet one has only to listen to the conversation of the plain man on this subject to learn how small on the whole the result has been. It is true that in some minds the old faith in the authority of the Bible has been utterly destroyed, while in others it has remained practically unchanged. Either way the old impression of unity has remained. One set of persons has said: "If parts of the Bible are wrong, then the whole is gone." Another set have said: "All this babble of the critics is an idle waste of energy; the Bible stands where it always stood, as the guide and the light of men." In both cases men are still thinking of it as one thing,

and this cannot be forgotten in any intelligent discussion of the subject. The Bible is still here as a factor in the thought and practice of Christians. It is not going to be resolved into its elements and disappear in the maze of critical controversy. Indeed the function of all criticism is to make literature more intelligible, and the criticism of the Bible is no exception.

Unitarians are and have generally been in fullest sympathy with all these modern attempts to place the biblical writings before the world as they were meant to be placed, each in its own proper order of time and of composition and each translated so as to give the meaning which its author, ignorant as we all are of the future, intended to give it. So presented, they find in them a principle of unity far higher and more impressive than any artificial principle could be. They think of the Old Testament as the record of the life of a people inspired, as no other people within the range of our vision has been, by the genius of religion. They value this record because, coming out of the religious consciousness of one race, it may serve the highest purpose in rousing and maintaining the same religious consciousness in other races. As the Hebrew, fighting his way to national recognition in the midst of warring peoples, found his rallying point in the worship of Jehovah, so our own nation in its struggles for national unity and its

highest expression in righteousness of life, may draw hope and courage from loyalty to a divine ideal.

It is not a question of accepting or rejecting every detail of Hebrew theology or Hebrew morality. We may use and reverence the Old Testament without accepting the ancient notion of a God made in the likeness of an earthly ruler. We may admire heroism and devotion, justice and mercy, without accepting the provisions of the Levitical Law. We may share the rapture of the Psalmist and yet not admire David as an example of decent living. Still less are we concerned with questions of historical accuracy. We may know for certain that this fact or series of facts is presented wholly out of historical sequence. This is nothing more than what happens constantly with the material of any other record. We do not, on this account, reject the record as unhistorical; we only try to straighten it out and to understand it in its proper shape. Then, when this is done, and not until then, the record becomes valuable for the education of humanity. So it is with that wonderful collection of history, poetry, and law we are here dealing with.

Unitarians have no fear of the critical process, because they try to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential. "Criticism," which is nothing more than careful and intelligent examination, deals with the

detail of language, history, usages, beliefs of the people whose record it studies. When its work is done, — if it ever could be done, — there remains the really important thing, the picture of the people's activity and of its highest thought. Criticism is useful only as it helps to make the picture more accurate, to explain and justify the process of the thought.

So far Unitarians go alongside of all others who in these days of science have been trying to make the Bible more useful to the world in which we live. They accept the results of scholarship with cheerful confidence, because they believe scholars to be on the whole serious and right-minded persons who are seeking for truth by methods of their own and because they are quite sure that truth is *one* and must prevail. Again, we must emphasize the Unitarian principle, that no truth can really contradict another truth, and that therefore the only safe attitude towards all serious pursuit of truth is the attitude of encouragement and hopefulness. We are not concerned here with hasty or ill-considered or partisan or flippant judgments masquerading under the mask of scholarship. Like all other shams, these will meet their natural fate in the long account. We can deal here only with honest work by honest men, and in valuing honesty Unitarians can hardly flatter themselves that they differ greatly, at least in intention, from

other men. Wherein, then, is the Unitarian position in regard to the Bible peculiar? What advantage have Unitarians over others in their approach to this question?

The first advantage they can properly claim is that to them the books of the Bible, no matter what their character, prophecy, legend, law, poetry, history, or what not, are the work of human beings. Their faith on this point is part of their general conviction as to human nature. They believe men to be capable of producing the best there is in this body of literature, and they are sure that none but men could have produced the worst. To put it in more conventional language, their views about Revelation and Inspiration differ radically from those which have been traditional in the Church. Unitarians like these words. They would be glad to keep them; but they would a thousand times rather give them up altogether than let it be supposed for a moment that they accept them in their conventional meanings. Here again Unitarians find themselves in line with certain recognizable tendencies from the earliest ages of the Church. The definitions of revelation and inspiration have always varied widely with times and with individuals. On the one hand there have been those who have thought of revelation as a process by which truth, so far as it con-

cerned the highest things, came to men quite apart from their ordinary ways of reaching it. Ordinarily we study and experiment; we think and draw conclusions, and when we come to a stopping place we say we have discovered some fragment of a truth. It is a laborious method, not dramatic or picturesque. It seems to be a part of our "fallen" nature that we should have to struggle and stumble along in this painful fashion only at last to know that we have attained only to an imperfect insight, have grasped only half truths, have caught only passing glimpses of the full vision that seems somehow to belong to us by right. It is no wonder that men have been impatient of such slow progress and have turned with relief to the thought of another and more flattering method. The plodding must indeed go on; that is a part of our human discipline, but that is not all. From time to time God, in his mercy, intervenes and conveys to men directly, without the mediation of their own powers, such portions of truth as it seems best to Him to give. The men through whom this truth comes are "mediums" of the Holy Spirit. They do not discover truth by any effort of their own. It comes to them without their seeking. It is independent of their preparation, spiritual or mental. They are not the product of their time; they are picked out from among the ranks of men by a direct

choice of God, and their utterances are not their own, but are in very truth the voice of God himself. Revelation thus differs from every other means by which the highest truth is conveyed to men in being a *direct* message carrying an authority above all human sanction.

That is one view of revelation. Parallel with it has been moving, however, another, equally well-defined, but requiring a somewhat more ample consideration. According to this other view, religious truth, like all other truth, comes to men through the natural development of their own powers. Like everything else worth having, it must be bought and paid for. The struggle for truth, like the struggle for virtue, is a part of our human inheritance. It is not a penalty for anything, except for being men. It is the struggle that makes the truth valuable. It would be as mean to ask for truth without work, as it is to ask for "salvation" as the free gift of any one. Nor is the struggle to be thought of as merely painful, discouraging, depressing. On the contrary, it has the joy that always comes with the conflict of good against evil. Sometimes it brings the fierce joy of battle, when the forces of light are clearly arrayed against those of darkness, and blows ring on the armor of superstition and formalism. Sometimes it is the gentler joy of patient labor, when the mind, groping for a while in uncertainty, works its way out

through dimly lighted ways into the full vision of new heavens and a new earth. But whatever may be its nature, the conflict is worth all it costs. It is only through struggle that men's powers are quickened. If they are not used they fail and die, and men sink back into a dull acceptance of whatever some authority, clothed in the respectable garments of tradition, may offer them. But if they are used, every man for himself trying to gain the measure of truth of which he is capable, then these powers grow more acute. Men come to see more and more clearly into the realities of thought and life. Truth won in this way at the cost of serious individual effort has a value that no merely accepted ideas can ever have. It enters, vitally and productively, into the lives of men. It moves ever forward and not back. It leads men on to new adjustments of their former thought. It helps them to understand and to value the discoveries of other men and to judge them, whether they be really new fragments of the universal truth or no.

Not only, therefore, are Unitarians not dismayed by the struggle after truth: they welcome it and rejoice in it as the only means they can understand by which the highest truth is effectively carried to the minds and hearts of men. It is in this process and only thus that they come to a definition of Revelation. They see the

struggle after truth going on from age to age, one generation handing on to the next the results and the materials of its own conflict, and then from point to point they find some people or some individual showing, as it were, the ripened accumulation of all this effort. In the utterances of this people or of these individuals they read the gradual unfolding of the will of God, and they call that Revelation. They know well that the process is not continuous. It moves, not like some vast river sweeping on in one resistless course from the mountains to the sea, but rather like some desert stream, welling up among rocky gorges, making its way through burning shallows, now lost for a space in the engulfing sands, now rising again in blessed oases where the people find their rest and refreshment; again disappearing, but never lost and never reaching an end discernible to man.

There is no thought more abhorrent to the Unitarian than that revelation should have been made once for all, to one people, at one time, through one channel, never needing to be renewed or re-interpreted. Such an idea of revelation seems to him to contradict every true conception of deity and manhood alike. In this matter he has the deepest sympathy with those enthusiasts of the second and third centuries who proclaimed a "New Prophecy" and justified themselves on the ground that all revelation needed to be supplemented

and completed by new revelation. Mankind, they said, was able at any given time to receive only a certain measure of divine truth and therefore must be given ever new declarations suited to its new condition. One sees that the really deepest truth in the "New Prophecy" was this clear indication of an ever advancing education of humanity. The Unitarian takes this truth and puts it into other language. He says: Mankind, endowed with power of insight into the deepest things of the spirit, may, nay must, cultivate that power. It is his most precious gift, and he would be recreant to every trust if he failed to make the most of it. As he uses it, spiritual truths become clearer and clearer to him. He does not expect to attain to the perfect vision. If he did, he would cease to be man, and he is content to remain what he was made to be, with all its possibilities for higher development. Nor, again, does he expect *new* truth in any absolute sense. Rather he strives to find out for himself, as a man of to-day, living in the midst of all to-day's struggle and all to-day's resources, the permanent principles of the divine order and then, so far as he finds them, to live by them.

These principles, wherever he can find them, in book or in life, are the revelation of God. The movement of mankind is a process of education. Man understands

to-day what he could not understand some years ago, because his vision of the world has become enlarged. In other words he is open now to wider revelations, and he will get them if with all his heart he truly seeks them — not otherwise. No divine messenger comes to the unprepared or the unseeking mind. We must ask to receive; we must seek to find; we must knock — hard — if we expect to find the doors of apprehension opening to us. Revelation means, then, to the Unitarian, only spiritual comprehension seen from the other side. Its essence is in the ineradicable human demand for more and ever more clearness in understanding the relations of man to the world in which he forms a part and to the divine source from which he traces alike his and its descent. In answer to that demand the knowledge, the certainty he craves, comes. It comes always and everywhere — only, it requires also on the part of man a judgment as to whether it be indeed the revelation of God. He is not bound to accept every pretended declaration of the highest truth as if it carried with it a supreme authority — rather, he is bound to test it by some standard, and in this testing process we find ourselves before one of the most searching questions of all religions.

By what standard is an alleged revelation to be judged? Surely, again, by no absolute test. We are

not in possession of absolute measures of spiritual values. Whatever the standard may be, it must have its basis in some human subject, individual or collective. There have been many answers to this question within the limits of Christianity, but they all reduce themselves finally to two. Revelation is to be judged and measured either by a recognized human authority or by the undefinable, but none the less clear and emphatic, witness of the spirit of all truth in the hearts of individual men. The former solution has, of course, been that which has chiefly commended itself to men. It has appealed to them through the eternal child that is in man, — the willingness, nay, the eagerness, to be led; the dread of uncertainty; the fear of error; the blind reliance upon the older and greater power near us, as the younger child looks up to the elder one as the embodiment of all goodness and all wisdom. That is one side of it. Then, on the other side, has been the natural human impulse to exploit these childlike motives for ends good and bad. Men have joined themselves together into a great association claiming for itself a divine commission to receive and hold and interpret for all men the ultimate sources of religious truth. Revelation left free would, so it has been said, destroy itself in every kind of unruly and violent expression. One revelation would contradict another; there would

be controversies without end; Christians would be hopelessly divided upon the most important questions. The only safety lay in acquiescence with the dictation of the organized authority. That acquiescence being, then, desirable, it followed that it might be enforced by every known method of compelling obedience.

That has been the solution, historically, of the problem of testing revelation. The historic Church assumed the function, applied the tests, and declared the revelation closed. Henceforth, every effort of the individual mind or conscience to interpret for itself the "Word of God" was rebellion, revolt against the divinely constituted arbiter of all truth. Every other association of men, in no matter how honest an effort to understand and interpret and maintain the same body of declared revelation, was not a branch of the Christian Church, but a mere conventicle of misguided men, afloat on a sea of vague imaginings, without rudder or compass. The great release of the Protestant Reformation did not, so far as its immediate claims were concerned, greatly change the situation. It did indeed destroy, once and for all, the idea of a single permanent human authority to which all men were bound to look for the last word in faith and conduct; but it substituted, or declared that it substituted, for this personal authority, another no less binding and even more permanent, the

authority of the written book. This substitution of one authority for another has often been made a cause of reproach against the Reformation, as if men ought to have seen farther ahead than the needs and possibilities of their own day. Some men there were, even in the sixteenth century, who felt the limitation of the dominant view; but they proved to be the radicals, even the fanatics, of the reform movement. The responsible leaders saw, wisely, that to ensure any rational measure of success for the cause they had most at heart they must not move too fast or too far. It would never have done to cast away the principle of papal authority and shake off the control of the Roman ecclesiastical law without offering in their place some single and tangible substitute. A direct appeal to the higher law of the spirit would have fallen upon deaf ears, or if heard at all would have been wildly misunderstood.

And yet from the first moment when the principle of the authority of the Bible was proclaimed as the one sufficient guide of Christian faith and practice, the emancipation of men's minds from any external control was also declared. For from that moment it was clear that this one all-sufficient "Word of God" must be widely interpreted. Until then there had been but the one official interpreter, claiming as of right to be the sole medium through which the meaning of the

written book could be brought home to the consciousness of men. But now that one interpreter had been rejected, and men found themselves face to face with two alternatives: either they must agree upon a verbal and literal meaning, or else they must give room for individual learning and critical inquiry. Both of these methods were tried; but with the increasing enlightenment of the new age there could be no doubt which would prevail. The method of literalness was, and always must be, a method of despair. It is the negation of everything that can permanently command the respect of thinking men. To insist upon it is equivalent to asking that men should cease to use their minds; and that they will not long consent to do. It was tried and met its inevitable fate. In its place came, slowly, with hesitation and apology, but ever with steadier step and more assured conviction, the method of learned and reverent inquiry and examination. When Luther declared, with characteristic vehemence, that the Epistle of James was nothing but an "epistle of straw," because "there was no Christ in it," he was laying down a principle of criticism that has been working from that day to this. If he, Luther, had the right to a personal judgment as to the value of a canonical book, he could never deny to any other learned and serious minded man the same right. Otherwise he

would only have been proclaiming himself in place of the Pope he had renounced. Without intending it, he had opened up the way for that free and fearless study of the written word which is the chief glory of modern scientific theology. Combated by "the Church," it has commended itself to the churches, and its victory, so long as it holds itself within the same bounds that are set for all science, is secure. It need hardly be added that with all this process of bringing this portion of the divine revelation to the understanding of men, Unitarians have as a body been in perfect sympathy. If they have not been the leaders in it, this has been partly because they have never laid that emphasis upon the Bible as the sole source of Christian truth which other bodies of Christians have given to it and partly also because many of what seem to others startling results of learned research have been from the beginning among the commonplaces of their thought. Their acceptance of these results has been prompt and hearty. The spirit which has moved men to such inquiries, the spirit of free and independent thought, the right of the human mind to give itself satisfaction on these as well as on all other rational questions, is the very spirit of Unitarianism.

From what we have just said about Revelation fol-

lows, as its necessary sequence, the Unitarian thought about Inspiration. This, too, is a word Unitarians like and would be sorry to part with. It means a great deal to them provided they may give it their own meanings. Otherwise they must, to be honest, let it go and seek to express their thought in other ways. Revelation we have understood as the unfolding to men, through their own powers, of the divine plan. Inspiration may be defined as the agency through which revelation acts. The two terms are correlative. Revelation is made known through "inspired" men. Inspiration is the means of revelation. An inspired man is one who has a revelation to make. There is a history to the word inspiration as there is to the word revelation, and this history has followed in general the same course. From a very early moment in the life of Christianity, the minds of thinking men were turned to the question of the personalities through whom the alleged revelations had taken place. Beginning with Jesus himself the inquiry could not help being made: How were these men selected from the mass of mankind to do this specific work? It was evident that, with the exception of Paul, the alleged authors of the New Testament writings were not men of such formal education that they could be described as religious philosophers working out a scheme of religion on the basis of scholarly inquiry or of pro-

found individual reflection. In general, the same presumption would hold also for the writers of the Old Testament. Their varied production could not be described as a distinctively learned "output." In both cases the source of the spiritual strength that gave to the Bible its claim upon the attention of mankind was felt to be in something not reducible to the ordinary processes of human education.

The word for that something was "inspiration." Its formal definition was simple enough. It meant what its derivation indicated — the "inbreathing" of a message or of a personal quality from some source outside the man himself. The inspired man was one upon whom the divine breath had blown and given him a certainty and an authority not derivable from any other source. So far men were agreed, but from this point on divergent views began to appear. As in the case of revelation so here there were marked extremes. On the one hand it was held that the inspiration by which a revelation was made possible must be absolute and direct. It could make no difference what kind of person was its vehicle — not even personal saintliness was a condition, and still less a trained intellect. "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth" was a sufficient answer to all objections. The writers of the old and the new canons alike were *calami dei, amanuenses spiritus*

sancti, mere mouthpieces for the Spirit. They were not even personally affected by the work they were set to do; they hardly knew they were doing it. They did not understand the message they delivered. When they were not immediately engaged in the work of writing, they became at once the plain, commonplace persons they seemed to be. Such a view as this excluded every idea of inspiration as conveying personal quality. At most it could give only aptitudes, which ceased when they were not called into immediate action.

This extreme view had the merit of simplicity and consistency. It avoided all subtlety of reflection, and it seemed to carry with it the more authority as it excluded human agencies from the work of revelation. Yet it was never formally accepted by the Church. Like the extreme impersonal view of revelation, it is a doctrine of despair. It should be said to the eternal honor of the Catholic Church that it has never been willing to eliminate the human element from its thought of the divine process in dealing with the souls of men. It accepted the idea of "inspiration" as of something essentially superior to the ordinary processes of human activity; but it recognized also that all results of inspiration required to be interpreted. It certified certain leaders of Christian thought, certain "Fathers," as preeminently qualified to give such interpretation, but it

was not bound even by these. It reserved to its own administration, through its principle of a government at once human and divine, the continuing right to give final judgment upon the actual meaning of disputed texts of Scripture. It had scant patience with any doctrines of literalism. It treated such extravagances as in the earlier stages it had dealt with all that body of puritanic rigorism known under the general term of Montanism. It thrust them out into a limbo in which belonged whatever aberrations from the strictly sound could be regarded as dangerous outgrowths rather than as positive errors. It was reserved for the more thoroughgoing "evangelical" parties of the Reformation to force this issue to its ultimate conclusion and, in so forcing it, to develop the germs of ruin it carries within itself. Allowed to have its way, it went to pieces by its own weight and can no longer command a patient hearing among thinking men.

In its place there comes a variety of attempts to set the limits of the inspiration of men whom all were willing to call "inspired." Sometimes it was said that they were technically inspired along certain lines and not in others. Distinctions were drawn between their function in spiritual matters and in things purely material. When they wrote history, it was said they were just ordinary men; when they wrote poetry they were

something a little different from men; when they rose to the heights of prophecy they were hardly men at all, but beings almost divine. The value of what they wrote came, not from its own intrinsic merit, but from the fact of inspiration. Whatever was said by an "inspired" man, no matter if it were the veriest nonsense when measured by human standards, was to be read with respect and somehow made to square with his really worthy utterances. This kind of circular reasoning can hardly seem to us anything but a rather pitiful waste of energy and yet it carried with it great promise of light and help. Behind it all lay the one hopeful sign that, after all, men were setting themselves free from the trammels of literalism and were coming to recognize the truly human side in the production of religious literature.

As soon as this note was touched, men came to see that there was going to be a way out of their hesitations and fears. It became clear that human standards must be applied if human beings were to be satisfied in their demands for an intelligent and an intelligible faith. It was seen that really men had always been using their minds, even when they were protesting that in these matters they had no minds to use. Even in the establishment of a canon of the Old and of the New Testament, in the selection of certain writings and the rejec-

tion of others, men *had* used judgments, had applied standards, had acted for themselves. Unless we were to go back to the vicious circle again and say that the men who made these selections were themselves "inspired," in the rigid sense of that word, so that their action was dictated by a power outside themselves, it was evident that here, at the very beginning, the principle of "criticism" had been laid down and acted upon. So it had been with the later, mediæval treatments of the Bible. Human ingenuity practised upon it with cruel thoroughness. It was twisted and tortured out of all semblance of reason. Its plainest statements were exhibited to a delighted world in their "allegorical," their "tropological," and their "anagogical" meanings until the words of Scripture came to be hardly more than so many counters in a game, the rules of which were likely to be changed whenever it became tiresome to the players. As one wades through the tangle of this half insane juggling with the original documents of Christianity, one is almost inclined to think that the boldest literalism might be less dangerous. And yet, through it all, there is the one hopeful, forward pointing sign: that the minds of men were working on the problem of getting at the meaning of a divine message in human ways. In their own fashion these hair-splitting theologians of the Middle Ages were engaged upon a

psychology of inspiration, sifting it to its depths and trying it by every conceivable test of human ingenuity. They believed themselves to be the most absolutely unquestioning recipients of a divine message from without. In reality they were asserting the right of their manhood to reduce this message to forms suited to their own powers of apprehension.

The men of the Reformation seemed to have taken a backward step toward literalism and the extremest forms of objective inspiration. With their intense emphasis upon Scripture as the sole ultimate authority for Christian faith, they could hardly have done otherwise than seek to remove it as far as possible from all danger of subjective opinion. They did what they could, but it was not for men who had themselves rejected the principle of a single authoritative interpretation of Christian truth to set bounds to the spirit of inquiry they had evoked. The work of interpreting Scripture must needs go on, and it went on along the lines of natural, human progress. The discussions within the Reform camp, notably during the seventeenth century, on the question of inspiration, show how hard the struggle was between literalism and liberalism. Even as late as this it seemed to many worthy souls that all the gains of the century just passed were at stake if the element of human personality in the writers of Scripture were to be given

more than a merely formal recognition. After the Reformation as before, men were afraid of man. Indeed, the emphasis of the Reformation upon the Augustinian doctrine of sin carried with it a renewed distrust of human nature. Sinful beings like ourselves could not be conceived of as the real authors of the great message of the old and the new dispensations. And this distrust has continued. "I don't believe the Hebrews ever wrote the books of the Old Testament," said a university professor, not a theologian, to the writer not long since. "But why not?" "Because men of so low a grade as the ancient Hebrews showed themselves to be could never have risen to such heights of spiritual utterance." "Who, then, do you think wrote them?" "No one but God himself." Blanker mindlessness than this can hardly be imagined, but it certainly represents a widely extended opinion — or sentiment taking the place of opinion — at the present day. We have already given it the credit of simplicity and consistency. It relieves the mind at once from any strain and lulls the conscience into a grateful repose.

It is precisely against this attitude of distrust toward human nature that Unitarians have reacted in their thought about Inspiration. They do not believe the ancient Hebrews or any other people to have been chiefly wicked or foolish or unspiritual. They believe

every people, like every individual, to be made up of capacities for activity of many and different kinds. What the race may become or may do in the world, depends upon the development of these capacities, just as the character and the achievement of a man depend upon the direction and the employment of the capacities with which he is naturally endowed. The ancient Greek and the mediæval Italian were gifted with the sense of beauty and with the capacity for abstract speculation. The ancient Romans and the modern English have been the great examples of widely directed power in the organization of human society under law. Other nations have had these same capacities, only in lesser degree, so that we may fairly speak of these as the flowering out into perfection of qualities belonging to the human race as a whole.

So it was with the especial endowment of the Hebrew people. Every branch of the human family has had its religious instinct and has worked it out into some form of expression peculiar to itself — in conformity, as we say, to its own genius. But, in the case of the Hebrew race, this religious instinct may be thought of as its chief directing motive. It is certainly nothing peculiar that its history and its aspirations were identified with its divine ideals. That was the case with most peoples. The gods were *their* gods, and what

they did, the gods did with them. That is not the remarkable thing about the Hebrew contribution to the world's store of experience. What gave to the Hebrew people its special claim to the attention of the world was its capacity for stripping away from the conception of deity all merely decorative and external elements and rising to the thought of Deity pure and simple as the sole guide and light of men. In its highest moments, Hebrew "prophecy" touched a level no other ever reached, and even its lower expressions reveal a striving after spiritual clearness such as no other religious literature can furnish. What then? Shall we say that the men who brought to utterance all this accumulation of the people's spiritual endowment were anything but men, gifted above their fellows with the power of insight which all shared in a greater or less degree?

The Unitarian answers that question with a distinct and unqualified "no." He believes the great voices of the Hebrew past to have been the voices of human beings, specially gifted in this way as others have been gifted in other ways. He sees, for example, a perfect analogy in the varied endowment of men with the subtle gift of music. We find whole races of men where musical susceptibility is almost universal, and others where it is altogether exceptional. Among the more gifted peoples arise with great frequency individuals in

whom the universal endowment reaches an acute degree. What others attain with infinite pains comes to them as easily as the breath of life. Sometimes such rare endowment is a mere snare to the soul, — a wild, passionate impulse, leading no whither and breaking itself to pieces against the limitations of circumstance. But when it is combined with vital gifts of character, then it blossoms out into the full flower of genius to captivate the world. We might multiply illustrations from poetry, from painting, philosophy, language, mathematics, from every field in which the mind of man can exercise itself. Everywhere we meet the same thing, — a broad foundation of capacity; and rising upon this here and there the towering structure of what we call, in our lack of suitable words, — "genius." Capacity, the inalienable gift of mankind, is the background against which the perfect creations of genius stand out in such marvellous relief that we are tempted to think of them as something altogether different in nature. It is part of our human limitation that we are caught by the striking and exceptional and easily forget the process by which it was attained. We wander through the great collections of ancient and mediæval art and linger long before the masterpieces of Phidias and Praxiteles, of Michael Angelo and Titian and the rest of the great ones who have made their names and their day immortal; but after

all, when one comes to think about it, the really impressive thing is not the perfection attained by these few, but the extraordinary endowment of talent in the age they represent. The hundreds of lesser achievements of lesser men bear witness to the solidity of the foundation on which these masterpieces of genius were built up. Or, rather — for the figure of a building is too mechanical in its suggestion — we see in the vast production of lesser works the roots, the stem, the life currents from which the flower of genius was to be developed. Given all this endowment of a race, and great, striking individual expressions of it are as sure to follow as the flower follows from the bud and the fruit from the flower. Then men stand agape at the marvellous individual and overlook the process that made him. We hail as "inspired," men who are the natural expression of what is in a race, a nation, an age, — who are what they are because thousands of others have lived, and worked, and sacrificed to make them so.

How this comes about, we are not here attempting to inquire. The problem of genius, the whole question of the relation of the individual to the mass, is, and will remain, one of the most perplexing, as it is also one of the most fascinating, to the speculative philosopher. What concerns us here is that religious genius is to be

studied and understood, so far as it can be understood at all, on precisely the same lines as any other form of genius. If we may speak of literary, or musical, or artistic genius as the result of "inspiration," then we are ready to accept this word also for religious genius — not otherwise. The process is as mysterious in the one case as in the other. We know little about it, and yet there are probably few of us who have not at times caught glimpses into the unseen region of consciousness whose borders touch at so many points our everyday world of classified experience. Certainly every productive worker whose heart is in his work has seen moments when he seemed to be seized upon by some power outside himself and carried on to results he had not himself foreseen. The poet, *i.e.* the man of "creative" force, no matter in what material he works, never can know quite the form his product will take. He feels the impulse to create, and he sets himself to his work, and as he works, the crude material at his hand takes on shapes he had not anticipated. Only the touch of genius in him tells him when these shapes are right, and helps him to correct them when they are wrong. He could not have said beforehand at what points in his progress he would rise above his own level and seem to be for the moment an instrument in the hand of some greater power. Yet such moments come, perhaps not perceived by him, but

evident to us, who see his finished work. Then we say, because we do not know how otherwise to express it, these are really "inspirations." The man does it; we know he does it, just as we know we have written a very good letter to a friend, though when we took our pen we had only the vaguest idea of what we meant to say. We do not imagine ourselves to have been "inspired" in writing our letter in any sense excepting that we have done our best. Nothing has come out of us that was not in us. We had not thought it out in precisely this form, but in the act of writing we have discovered the form suited to our need. We could not have written just this letter if we had not long been in possession of the material, if the thoughts had not been familiar to us, and if we had not by experience gained the power of deciding whether the form of it as it came to us was suited to our purpose.

Now the Unitarian sees no essential difference between these lower forms of "inspiration" and the higher expressions of religious prophecy. He claims the right to apply to the higher forms as to the lower the supreme test of their power to appeal to him. If they are worthy of being called "inspired," they are so because they inspire him. If not, then for him they have no compelling value. In other words, he dares to apply here as everywhere the subjective test. There is for him no

compulsion to accept what others have declared to be inspired Scripture except as it appeals to that in him which ought to respond to any such imperative demand. He sees that in fact, in the very act of setting up this body of writings as authoritative, the men who did this were really doing the same thing he claims the right to do. They had their standards as to what a truly "inspired" writing ought to be, and why may he not have the same privilege?

It will be said that on this point as upon others the Unitarian view is negative, destructive, and depressing. To the Unitarian mind, on the contrary, it appears to be quite the opposite of all these. It is a positive view because it rests upon a great positive declaration; namely, upon faith in the capacity of human nature to do the greatest things that human life requires of it. As the world goes on its way, the thousand activities of men moving along, now side by side, now in conflict, there come times when the thoughts, the aspirations, the promise of a people must find their expression through the voices most capable of giving them adequate form. Hundreds may try it, but they are silenced by the clamor of petty interests; till at last, no one can predict when or how, the man comes. He, too, will have his sorrows. The prophet will be persecuted; but he will be heard. What he says will remain, and men will

say, "Here was a man inspired of God." So he was, but so also was the activity, the struggle, the failure, and the triumphs on which the work of the prophet rested. He was the flower of it all, — not a something apart from human life, but essentially and vitally of it. His word was not his alone, but also the voice of the people at its best, and that is why the people heard him. These are not negations; they are the declaration of principles as positive as any that ever determined the thought of any group of serious men.

This means also that besides being positive, the Unitarian thought about Inspiration is distinctly not destructive, but constructive. It is not destructive, because it is in harmony with the best and clearest thought of all time about the method of the divine dealing with man. In spite of the prevalence of the idea of spasmodic interference, there has never been wanting a protest against it. The dignity of human nature as the chief handiwork of God has never lacked vindication. Unitarianism only claims for itself a freer and more complete application of this principle to the problems of speculative thought. If men can really and heartily believe, as Unitarians do, that "inspiration" must be taken to include every expression of the highest there is in man, then upon this foundation they may build up a complete structure of rational faith and a

complete programme of rational living. That is what they mean by a constructive idea; that it has in it the germs of a fruitful development, and this can be only if the idea is itself in harmony with the working laws at once of our own thought and of the world upon which our thought is exercised.

So, again, the Unitarian finds in his view of inspiration, not a cause for depression, but for every suggestion of hope and courage. It would depress him if he were compelled to believe that men were mere instruments to be played upon by the breath of an unrelated spirit, as air is forced into the pipes of an organ. That would make him inclined to sink back into a dull receptivity, waiting for an "inspiration" that might never come. But now, believing as he does that inspiration is to be had only at the price of labor, he is ready to put his hand to the work that lies near him, in a cheerful confidence that he is making his contribution to some great and truly inspired utterance, whereby mankind shall be lifted up and carried on to renewed labor and to new and ever new prophetic deliverance.

For the Unitarian, strongly as he may emphasize the dependence of inspiration upon the solid movement of humanity in general, is by no means indifferent to the reaction of the prophet upon this world. If it is true that there could be no prophets without the previous

experience of the people from which they draw their inspiration, it is equally true that the people's life would be a barren thing indeed if it were not steadily illumined and quickened and encouraged by the prophetic word. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The true relation of these two things, the "inspired" man and the people for whom he stands, is a reciprocal relation. Neither can do without the other. The prophet cannot be heard except by a people with whose inner life he is in natural sympathy. The people cannot have a prophet unless somehow it keep alive, though in obscurity and almost eclipse, the spark of a genuine and creative national hope. Woe to the prophet if he does not share his vision with the people! Woe to the people if it fail to listen to the true interpreter of its highest calling! The prophet has a right to demand a hearing, but — and here is the gist of the Unitarian position — the people have equally the right to make sure by every test at their command that he is a true prophet.

The Unitarian approaches the Bible with reverent attention. He accepts it as the highest revelation of the past to the present; the clearest expression of that spiritual endowment which is to him an essential part of the very idea of mankind. It appeals to him because, being the work of the human spirit, it carries

with it the promise and the guarantee that that spirit shall go on doing great things and thinking great thoughts and, whenever the people need, shall utter itself forth again in prophecy that will be heard.

CHAPTER V

JESUS

O thou great Friend to all the sons of men,
Who once appeared in humblest guise below,
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive's chain,
To call thy brethren forth from want and woe, —

Thee would I sing: thy truth is still the light
Which guides the nations groping on their way,
Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,
Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.

— *Theodore Parker.*

THE thought of Unitarians about the person of Jesus follows naturally the two lines of reflection we have been noting. The indivisibility of the divine and the essential worthiness of the human are to them the two indispensable foundations for an adequate notion of Jesus and his place in religious thought. From the first follows the inevitable conclusion that Jesus could not have been divine; from the second follows equally that to call him human is not to take away anything from his dignity or his value.

Let it be clearly set down at the outset that Unitarians believe Jesus of Nazareth to have been a man like the rest of us. He was born of a man and a woman as

we are, in obedience to that law of life which maintains the race and which cannot be violated. They believe this because they see no reason whatever not to believe it, and because in the absence of such reason they would always accept the natural and the normal rather than the abnormal and the mysterious. Unitarians find nothing in the simpler narratives of the life of Jesus to contradict their view of his completely human nature. On the contrary, they read in these meagre accounts the story of a human life beginning, growing, developing along perfectly intelligible lines; intelligible because they have been followed by so many others of the sons of men.

Of course, Unitarians perceive from an early point, mingled with the simple record, a parallel stream of mythical decoration. It is this mysterious element which has chiefly caught the attention of men and diverted them from the simpler side of the subject. And this, too, is natural. Men have always been prone to dwell upon the unusual, as if unusualness were in itself a claim to our interest and reverence. It would have been most strange if, the moment the person of Jesus became important as a rallying point for certain religious ideas, it had not been seized upon by the myth-building instinct of mankind and invested with an ample equipment of marvellous tales that should excite

the imagination of the faithful, rouse the interest of the inquiring, and give to the figure of Jesus himself a standing among the competing leaders of religious thought. All this was as natural as it was that the vivid play of Greek imagination should have peopled the world of Nature with a thousand living forms dealing with each other and with men as so many actual personalities. It was as natural as it was that Indian reverence should have clothed the Buddha with a vast decoration of marvellous qualities and achievements, or that Arabian fancy should have played about the person of Mohammed, even while Mohammedan theology insisted upon his unmodified humanity. The Unitarian does not spend energy in analyzing these outward details of Christian tradition, in determining how they originated, what part of them may be true and what part false, or in weighing evidence as to their effect in bringing men to the following of Jesus. Such labor seems to him rather to divert the mind from the real point at issue. The really important thing for him is to understand the relation of the life and teaching of Jesus to the world's religious thought, and he can do this only as he holds firmly to the one unwavering truth of his complete and unchanging humanity.

Historically, the Unitarian believes himself to be justified in his anxiety on this point by the experience

of the Church. He fears to let his fancy play ever so lightly about the idea of a double personality, lest he be tempted into the far-reaching illusions of the past. He sees in the whole history of the beliefs as to the nature of the Christ a confusion of ideas, slight at first, but growing denser with every effort to explain it, until it resulted in the mystical declarations of the earlier and the later creeds and fixed upon the Church that spirit of dogmatic speculation which has held it captive until now and is still working from point to point to maintain the card-palace of its institutions and its doctrine. The Unitarian view on this question will become clearer if we examine for a moment what really happened. Within the narrow world of Jewish life and thought appeared quite suddenly a youthful preacher of righteousness, similar to many a one who had gone before him. He was a Hebrew appealing to Hebrews, but in his appeal rising continually above the lower levels of national tradition and conventionality into higher regions of universal human experience. With every respect for the law, he proclaimed a higher law, whose sanction was to be found, not in a special covenant between a nation and *its* God, but in a deeper, more permanent relation of all men everywhere to a God who was the God of all things.

What the preparation of this teacher for his work

had been, we do not know. The simplest stories of his origin make him a man of the people, retaining to the last his connections with his immediate family and making no pretension whatever to any authority beyond that which came from a profound spiritual kinship with the source of all truth. He was, in the old true sense of the word, a "prophet," — one, that is, who uttered forth the ways of righteousness. His teaching was a morality founded upon a religion. It is not true that the Unitarian regards Jesus simply as a teacher of morality. The principles he laid down as to the right dealing of man with man were not all new in the world's thought. They were of the kind which over and over again in the ever renewed conflict of justice against oppression, of charity against selfishness, of purity against infamy, have come from the lips of reformers or been embodied in the codes of law-makers. What gave to the moral teaching of Jesus its peculiar significance was that its sanction was to be found in a new conception of the relation of morals to the government of the universe as a whole. Right was right, not because the law said so, nor because in some distant past a compact had been made between a race and a God who belonged to *it*, nor because the state, standing for the race, had laid down this or that rule with its safeguards and its penalties. Rather,

right was right because of an essential harmony between God and man as creator and created, as father and child. That was to be henceforth the test and standard of morality. If a man's actions were attuned to this greater harmony, then and then only were they, in the Christian sense, "right." The "spirit of truth," which was to abide among men forever, was to be its own interpreter, making plain to struggling man the ever new law of righteousness.

That was the mission of Jesus, and that, the Unitarian believes, was his whole mission — as if there could be anything greater than that — to show to all mankind the way of adjustment to the will of God!

But the world has never been satisfied with the simple and the obvious. The work and the personality of Jesus made so slight a ripple on the surface of contemporary life that scarce any record of them is to be found outside the immediate circle of his obscure and baffled following. Even there the tradition of a fairly early day is represented only by a singularly meagre and fragmentary account. Yet, even in the earliest records, there begins at once the inevitable activity of speculative thought struggling to make clearer what was already clear enough. The subtleties of the Greek training were brought in to obscure and mystify under the guise of explaining and harmonizing. It was not

enough that these philosophical exponents of Christianity should try to account for a human phenomenon so apparently inexplicable on ordinary grounds. They went on to confuse the personality of Jesus in a hopeless entanglement with an entirely different group of ideas, and in that confusion the theology of the Church has remained entangled to this day.

This other group of ideas takes us into a world of speculation in which for centuries before the time of Jesus and in many different countries human ingenuity had busied itself with persistent energy. It is the world of effort on the part of men to make manifest to themselves the working of divine power among them. There are two forms of Deity which, no matter how they may be disguised by words, are always sure to occupy the thought of whoever enters into this world of speculation. Sooner or later the mind comes to see that Deity is to be thought of either as absolute or as relative. Absolute Deity is a conception of the trained mind of the philosopher, — a conception so simple that it requires profound insight to reach it. It can be gained only by stripping away, one after the other, all those secondary ideas about Deity to which the average thinking mind is so accustomed that it seems almost born to them. Absolute Deity is as hard to comprehend and as useless for actual living purposes as is the

Absolute in any other human affair. Practically, the mind refuses to dwell long upon absolute ideas. It can reach them, if at all, only through ideas of relativity. In plain language, it demands of Deity, as of everything else, that it shall be expressed in terms of something outside itself. It finds relief from the struggle after the Absolute in employing terms which suggest the relation of Deity to that which is not Deity. For example, the word "creator" is such a term. The moment we speak it, we feel that we have brought the idea of God more nearly within the range of our own limited powers. He is no longer a mere abstraction, living in remote and incomprehensible repose. He is at once brought into the region of activities, and these we can at least somewhat more readily comprehend. "Father" is another such word. While "creator" suggests one kind of activities, such as we associate with the idea of the artisan who makes things unlike himself, the word "father" suggests an altogether different line of activity. It hints to us of the familiar processes of Nature, the silent working of the forces by which like produces like and, producing, is bound to its like by every tender tie of duty and affection. The word "friend" suggests still another aspect of the divine relation. It adds to the notions of creation and reproduction the idea of beneficence. The divine artifi-

cer and parent is also divinely beneficent, and in this new relation all the other forms of the divine expression find their meaning and their value.

One might go on thus illustrating this inevitable tendency of humanity to satisfy its imperative need of expressions of the divine. Our only purpose here is to make clear that in the early years of Christianity a struggle was everywhere going on, with a kind of feverish eagerness, to give new form to this demand. God, reduced to an abstraction in the wreck of the traditional polytheisms, must again be made manifest in some satisfactory expression. Great Pan was dead. The poetic, creative activity of the ancient mind that had kept the world supplied with ever multiplying images of the divine had ceased to work. The philosophies of the day were twisting and turning the vast problem in every conceivable light without ever coming quite to the solution that would commend itself to the consciousness of plain thinking men. Then, not suddenly, but with a marvellous clarifying power, the possible solution came. Out of the tangle of Hellenic subtlety playing upon the too bold simplicity of the Jewish tradition there emerged the — not new, but novel — conception of the Λόγος, the Divine Expression, the outward manifestation of that infolded pure Being, the utterance of that eternal Silence, the rapturous pro-

creation of that sublime Self-sufficiency we have been calling Absolute Deity. It was a wonderful discovery. As compared with the complicated polytheisms of the past, it was a vast simplification. Instead of a thousand forms of the divine expression, it offered but one; namely, the very idea of the divine expression itself. It was a discovery wholly in harmony with the declaration of the great new teacher, that God was spirit and that his worship must be undertaken in a spiritual way. It bridged the chasm between Absolute Deity and the universe of things, including the heart of man, with a highway, narrow indeed as compared with the vastness of the ancient polytheistic road, but having deep and strong foundations and broad enough, if only men should be able to rise to the level of the Master and walk there with him in spirit and in truth.

But now see what happened. This plain and spiritual solution was precisely what men could not rise to. Here were two entirely separate things: first, the person of a great teacher about whom were already gathering those mythical embellishments without which men were unable to account for his radiant personality. Then, second, there was already in existence the set of ideas about an expression of Deity which we have just considered. The notion of a Logos, a word of God,

whereby he brought himself into closest relation with man, was the key to a solution also of the vexed question as to the person of Jesus. Precisely how the two problems ran into one we do not know. That has been a question for the scholars of more than one generation. It has had many answers, but they do not concern us. We are interested only in the fact that the two things did run together and that each helped the other by giving to it something of its own peculiar character. Men were perplexed to account for the transcendent genius and the alleged wonder-working power of their prophet. They felt him to be more than man, but neither in his own teaching nor in the faith of his immediate followers was a formula to be found which precisely answered their question. The anxious curiosity of his disciples as to who he had been and what he really was, had been baffled by the lofty spiritual answers of the Master, and it had fared no better with the following generation in its attempt to find a satisfactory solution. On the other hand, the philosophers — of whom the Alexandrian Jew, Philo, may be taken as a type — had reached a brilliant abstraction in their Logos, but had not given to it such precision as could make it effective in moving the hearts of men. The "Word of God" might be given an infinite variety of interpretations, but no one of these could meet the cry

for a specific, definite object about which the awakened zeal for a new divine ideal might gather.

It was, therefore, a revelation of possibilities for both sides, for philosophy and for Christianity alike, when the decisive word was spoken: "The Logos *is* Jesus!" At once the human phenomenon was accounted for and the speculation of the philosophers was given a form which took it out of the world of abstractions and placed it in the very centre of men's practical, religious need. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" became henceforth the central declaration of speculative Christianity. What had been at first a spiritual exaltation and a quickened moral impulse was now identified with a dogmatic formula. It was, as we have developed it here, simple enough in its origin, but with ample room also for further elaboration. Jesus the man, the prophet, was also Christ the God, the expression of Deity, which was at the same time Deity itself. God and his utterance, the same and yet different, were now the doctrinal nucleus about which was to grow the vast structure of Christian dogmatism. From that day to this the two things, the man Jesus and the speculative Christ, have been, as we set out by saying, hopelessly entangled in a confusion which has grown worse as time has gone on. The simple figure of the greatest of human prophets has been obscured beyond

recognition in a determined effort to make it something other than it was. The creation of an exuberant speculative philosophy, useful as a formula for purely theological purposes, completely overgrew the human and rational aspects of the Christian problem. The myth of the divine paternity of the man Jesus was now explained in terms of the philosophic dogma. The divine which entered into him through the mystic process of an immaculate conception was God himself, only under the aspect of Deity in expression instead of Deity absolute.

Now here is the point at which the Unitarian thought of Jesus becomes clear. This long historical introduction has been necessary to give us the background against which this simpler view may be made to stand out. The Unitarian understands perfectly the two elements out of which the historical doctrine of the person of Christ has grown. He agrees with the later Church that Jesus was complete man. He accepts fully the notion of a Logos as a philosophic device for giving a name to a useful idea, the idea of Deity in expression — the divine Word — God in relation instead of God apart from all relations. He has his own way of understanding this formulation and will use it as it serves his purpose. But, and here is the peculiarity of his position, he will not let these two things, the humanity of Jesus and the philosophic proposition, run together.

To his mind they have no organic connection. One is a pure statement of an historic fact. The other is a piece of pure speculation. The value of each consists in its being kept clearly apart from the other. So, the Unitarian believes, were they apart in the beginning. He thinks himself, therefore, on surer ground, even from the point of view of history, when he refuses to let himself be carried away by the temptation to put together things that belong apart.

The Unitarian thinks he can make better use of the two elements of historic dogma by carrying each out to its natural conclusions than by trying to make an unnatural union between them. We shall have to return to the idea of the Logos in its proper place as an aspect of the doctrine of the nature of God. Enough to say here that to the Unitarian mind this idea of Deity in expression is too vast and too full of suggestions towards an adequate comprehension of the divine nature to be restricted in its meaning to any one single manifestation. The "Word of God" means too much to be limited to any one vehicle. It includes all those forms of the divine dealing with man by which man is lifted up from the material and the common into the higher reaches of the spiritual and the ideal. This word of God comes to every man in proportion to his capacity to take it. It came to Jesus of Nazareth in fullest measure because

he was preëminently qualified to receive it and make it intelligible to others. It passed through the clarifying medium of his extraordinary spiritual endowment and went on from him to elevate and enlighten all who should have ears to hear and minds to understand. That is what the Unitarian does with the speculative idea of the Logos. He uses it to make clearer to himself the thought of God. He is grateful for it to those early thinkers who have helped him to it. But he could not make it do him this service if he were to bind it organically to one single human figure, and it interests him to find, as he reads the writings of the great Christian theologians, how hard they struggled to free themselves from the same bondage. The best of them in their highest moments still clung to the larger spiritual view of the Logos which he, the Unitarian, maintains as essential. Their efforts were lost in the all-absorbing purpose of reaching formulas to which all the conflicting parties in the Church could be brought to consent. The Unitarian, utterly unconcerned as he is with this problem of a universal agreement, sees no reason why he should not hold fast to that which seems good to him, and it helps him to feel himself in fellowship with much of the noblest and most independent thought of the past.

On the other side of the question, — the side of the

pure humanity of Jesus, — the Unitarian rejoices especially in the liberty which comes when the person of the Master is set free from the entanglements of speculative theology. If, in the process of this disentanglement, he is forced into a use of language that seems to imply a certain disparagement, no sooner is the cause of offence removed than he is free to declare his unswerving allegiance to the example and the teaching of Jesus. Precisely *because* he believes Jesus to be a man like himself he finds in him an example. It means nothing to him to be told that a being of specific divine origin, even God himself, lived on this earth a life of singular purity, elevation, courage, sanity, and devotion. These are things that are taken for granted in divinity. Such words are, after all, only the symbolic phrases by which we seek faintly to express our ideas of the divine. We know, alas! only too well, that *we* are not — in any such sense — of divine origin. No heavenly splendors surrounded our nativity. Only the happy smiles of pure motherhood and the manly pride of confident fatherhood welcomed us into the struggle of human life. How shall we draw lessons of courage from a being who by his very definition *must* be brave, when all the time we know that as men we are made, not brave but only with the desire and the possibility of being brave? Why should a God, whose very nature is purity, sum-

mon me, in whose nature one-half is turned toward impulses of selfish desire, to be perfect as he is?

No, it is belief in the perfect humanity of Jesus that alone commends him to us as an attainable example. Without that he remains a mere abstraction, a shadowy image of humanity, a divine apparition clothed with the semblance, but utterly lacking in the reality, of a man. And what is true of Jesus as an example is equally true of him as a teacher. The Unitarian finds the chief sanction of Christian teaching in the perfect community of nature between the teacher and the great human world he tried to teach. This morality, that we, in our weakness and blindness, try to make the guide of our struggling lives — what could it mean to us if it were laid down by a divine being to whom the real struggle of human life could not be known? It would be for us as barren of real instruction as if it came from the inhabitants of another world, who had never learned the conditions that govern our lives here on the earth. It is only when we think of Jesus as a man, without figures of speech and without mental reservations, that his example and his teaching alike can be borne in upon us with that kind of conviction which can make them fruitful in our own actions.

It will be objected that following this view of Jesus we are led inevitably to the conclusion that he was a

man of "sin" as we know ourselves to be. "Tempted at all points as we are and *not* without sin" would seem to be the logical result from the doctrine of the complete humanity of Jesus. From this conclusion the Unitarian does not shrink. He is ready to admit with the utmost frankness that in all probability Jesus had his moments of opposition to the divine will which constitute the attitude of "sin." Even our meagre and laudatory accounts of him give abundant support for this view. Naturally such reports would not dwell upon this side of a prophet's experience, but no one can read the Gospels with open mind and not feel that they show us a man indeed. Jesus was a man in whom the impulses of a supreme charity were made to dominate over all others; but his victory was won, as all human victories must be won, after bitter struggle with his own lesser self. He was tempted by the devils of ambition, of power, of ease, of safety, and he overcame them, not in virtue of any specific divine quality which we do not share, but because in him the balance of power inclined to the side of good, as, by the fact of our common humanity, it may be made to do also in us. The radiance of this moral victory is not dimmed by the thought of defeats he may have suffered before his character had attained to that mastery shown in the brief record of his ministry. On the contrary, just as

in ordinary life we value the triumphs of the disciplined will in proportion to what they have cost, so our reverence for the person of Jesus ought rather to rise, as we admit the idea of failure and of wrong into our picture of his earthly career. More than ever, through this admission, we become his younger brothers, born of the same lineage, heirs of the same promise, sharers in the same covenant, moved by the same impulses and capable of the same triumphs — if only we will submit ourselves to the same discipline and draw our strength from the same eternal source.

The Unitarian finds himself strengthened in his insistence upon the pure humanity of Jesus when he sees how hard the Church of all ages has worked to maintain the same point. No error within Christianity has ever been fought with greater energy than the error of *Doketism*. That was a logical deduction from the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, which led men by various roads to the conclusion we have already hinted at, that the physical Jesus can have been only a delusion of the senses, — that he was not born, did not really live and suffer, especially did not really die. He only *seemed* to do all these things. It was really God who thus went through the forms of human experience in order that he might the better bring men into harmony with himself. To combat this one-sided logic the Church,

from an early day, insisted by every means in its power upon the real humanity of Jesus. It dwelt in its ritual, in its poetry, and in its art with special emphasis upon the figure of the suffering man. It developed as the central object of its regular devotion the mystic, sacrificial meal whereby the actual physical body of Jesus was made to live again — to be handled by the priest and taken into physical union with the bodies of the faithful. In this mystical fashion the physical death of the God-man was, and is, regularly brought home to the mind of the believer with the force of a physical demonstration.

Where then is the difference? It is here. The Church, while it has thus insisted upon the pure humanity of Jesus, has insisted equally upon the pure divinity of Christ and has confused the two ideas by maintaining a mystical union between them. Through its doctrine of a specific incarnation by means of a virgin birth, it has given to this confusion of ideas a dramatic form that has appealed powerfully to the imagination of centuries. So strong is this appeal even in our "scientific" day that within a generation one branch of the Church has been able to let the logic of the situation work backward by one degree and to proclaim the "immaculate" conception of the virgin mother of Jesus! Even so-called "Protestant" churches while rejecting

the worst extravagances of this Christian polytheism have retained the doctrine that makes them possible. They, too, insist upon confusing ideas which do not essentially belong together. They continue to repeat in their creeds and to defend through their theologies a tangle of contradictions dignified only by the seriousness with which it is maintained. They seem to be at that stage of development when men cling to forms for the forms' sake and defend untenable ideas for fear of some vague calamity that might attend their loss.

The Unitarian is freed from all such mysterious dread by his positive, clear distinction between the actual and the ideal. He welcomes in the happiest confidence the humanity of Jesus as common with his own and as therefore opening up to him ever fresh sources of inspiration and of courage. He accepts the leadership of Jesus in his own efforts to be a better member of the race which has found its highest expression so far in that inspiring personality. There is no relation of life as citizen, as parent, as laborer, as ruler, as servant, in which he cannot find continuous support in the consciousness of kinship with an elder brother, who saw all these relations in the light of a common divine responsibility and glorified them all forever by showing them to men under that illuminating aspect.

So, on the other hand, the Unitarian is quite able to understand the value of that theological process by which Deity is conceived of as projecting itself into the world of human experience. He believes most heartily that Jesus received in fullest measure that gift of insight into the true harmony of things which we cannot otherwise describe than by calling it "divine." That is, indeed, his definition of the divine, — the central principle of harmony that holds all being together in one unvarying law. He believes Jesus to have been a true interpreter of that law because it had so entered into him as to be a part of him — to make him, in some sense "divine." But the Unitarian believes also, with equal intensity, that this same divine quality that was in Jesus is also in every man that is born into the world. Less developed, rudimentary it may be still, but it is there and waiting only for the touch that shall make it spring into fruitful activity. Unitarianism ranges itself in this matter with what it feels to be the world's best and clearest thought at all times. It sees in the so-called Christian doctrine of an individual incarnation only one of many attempts to make tangible what many races at many times have tried to bring home to themselves — the sense of the divine, working in and through the very nature of man. In this effort he finds the explanation of all the world's polytheisms. These

seem to him only picturesque devices for bringing God nearer to man. Sometimes they picture Deity as taking on human forms, according to the functions it is called upon to perform; sometimes they elevate human personalities to divine levels as the only fitting expression for a distinction that seemed to lift certain elect individuals above all possibility of human classification. But in any case these were only devices to make definite what by its very nature must always remain undefined to man, — the being of God himself. That impossibility of definiteness the Unitarian accepts as final. He does not feel the necessity of incorporating his thought of God into any human form. He resents all polytheistic devices as an affront to his highest ideal of Deity, and among these devices he includes the so-called Christian doctrine of an incarnation by a virgin birth. He revolts against it on every account. He rejects it on the ground of history because he finds in other religions so close analogies to it that it loses whatever distinction might attach to it on the basis of a unique claim upon the faith of mankind. He revolts from it on its own merits, because it seems to him, not a glorification of human motherhood, but an insult to it. It qualifies as "sin" the purest and holiest of human relations. It dismisses the sacred function of fatherhood into a shadowy limbo of indifference and neglect. Instead of

elevating woman to her place as the indispensable and equal companion of man, it degrades her to be the vehicle of procreation, the mere channel through which flowed all that made her offspring higher than the "psychic man" of the philosophers, while she contributed only that which made him the "son of David," the material framework for the "sinless" god. It matters little that men have sought to evade the direct issue here. It is true that under the light of an age at once more rational and more spiritual, the grosser extravagances of this insidious doctrine have been widely rejected. While a fraction of the Church has tried to push these extravagances to their utmost limit, the rest have on the whole reduced them to an apparent minimum. Yet in spite of this the offence remains. The Unitarian alone among Christians takes an attitude on this point which can in no sense be described as a hesitating or negative one. It is in the most distinct sense positive, in that it rests upon the great assertions of the dignity at once of human nature and of the divine ideal. A God who should have to resort to so petty a device to set himself in a right relation with a race of beings he has himself created, would be, according to Unitarian thought, unworthy of the devotion of rational men. And a race of men that could not otherwise be held in its right relation with a

God whose being and attributes it has itself defined would not be worth the saving.

The Unitarian welcomes the whole conception of the "salvation" of the race through a human interpretation of the divine to men. He rejects the idea of a "salvation" accomplished by a violation of natural law, because it seems to him to interfere with this far grander and ampler conception of a continuous, unbroken, and never-to-be-ended unfolding of the divine plan through the thoughts and efforts of successive generations of mankind. The person of Jesus thus takes its place in Unitarian thought as one in a long line of revealers to men of the law by which they are called upon to live. He was not the first; he will not be the last. He declared himself to be, not the destroyer, but the fulfiller of what went before. At the close of his earthly work he declared again that he was leaving with men a something that would not fail them, namely, the Spirit of Truth, which was to stay with them forever. Thus he connected himself with the past and with the future alike, demonstrating in this way that he felt himself a link in an endless chain of prophecy. That is precisely the Unitarian thought.

Much time has been spent in efforts to prove that Unitarians have no right to the name of Christians. On the other hand, much energy has been wasted in

vigorous protests against the exclusion thus implied. It may safely be asserted that the Unitarian is not greatly concerned about names. It is far more important to him that a name should be given its right meaning than it is that it be preserved when the meaning has become perverted. He would far rather drop the name "Christian" than share it in many of the perverted senses it has acquired. If, for example, "Christian" means, as is constantly asserted in every variety of official utterance, the same thing as "Holy Catholic and Apostolic," then better a thousand times to drop it once for all and find a new word, or get along without any rather than place such a limit upon that Spirit of Truth which is forever among us. Or if, to be a Christian, one must be able to point to a certain variety of religious experience, whereby some specific and mysterious spiritual transformation can be certified to, then, indeed, the Unitarian, with a regret that has a certain touch of sympathy, must give up the name and do as well as he can without it. Or if, again, he only is a Christian who is willing to declare his assent to certain prescribed forms of theological beliefs, then the Unitarian must stand firmly upon his conscience and go his way.

The attempted exclusion of Unitarians from the Christian name has always rested upon one or the other of these grounds. Either because they have refused to

accept the discipline of the historic Church, or because they will not be bound by the dogmatic forms of any sect, they have been consigned to a limbo of their own, wherein, it must be acknowledged, they have not been as unhappy as perhaps they ought. They have found some comfort in the reflection, as true in the world of thought as in that of society, that "the exclusive man excludes himself." Each of these self-constituted arbiters of Christianity seems to Unitarians to be shutting itself out of that larger fellowship which, in the earliest days, delighted in sharing the joys and perils of "The Name." In that fellowship the Unitarian desires to be counted. He values the name Christian for many reasons. His own thought has a completely Christian basis.

It is not true that Unitarianism is a result of conscious study of the religions of the world and a patching together of such fragments from each as suited the purpose of its founders. It is true that Unitarians gladly recognize and welcome every kindred thought wherever they find it. It strengthens them to know that their way of approach to the hidden things of God has been trodden by many other feet of men. But in fact their most cherished ideas came into shape through a rational process within the lines of orthodox Christianity, and they have no desire to repudiate the paternity of these

ideas. They yield to no one in their admiration and devotion to the person of him to whom all Christians, no matter with what diversities, turn as to their common Master and Guide. It does not lessen his transcendent value to them that they recognize his kinship with the great spiritual leaders of all peoples and all ages. On the contrary, it is to them a far higher claim upon their allegiance that he stands within the lines of natural development and asks no assent to any prescribed forms of faith. They are interested to know all they can about other great leaders of religious thought — about Buddha and Zoroaster, Mohammed and the Greek and Roman religious and moral philosophers, but they do this not to see whether perchance they may find some other leader more worthy of their loyalty. They are satisfied with the leadership of Jesus so long as they are permitted to interpret this in the light of all the truth they can find anywhere. In that leadership they find perfect liberty, for it is to them of its very essence that in following it they learn the truth which makes them free.

CHAPTER VI

REDEMPTION

Under one form or another the idea of redemption enters into all of the more highly developed religions. It rests upon the two notions, first, of a normal relation between God and man; and, second, a severance or interruption of that relation. Somehow, at some time, this broken relation must be restored and man be brought back again into his true dependence upon God. The Christian problem was not essentially different from that of other religions. Here, too, there was a separation, a rebelling, a "fall" from an original high estate, wherein all men by virtue of their very manhood were included. Christian philosophy, working upon this universal basis, evolved a "scheme" — many schemes in fact, — whereby this loss might be made good, this war of rebellion ended, the victims of this "fall" be set up again on the heights where they really belonged.

It must be admitted that, dramatically considered, the materials for a scheme of redemption were attractive enough. On the one hand, Deity projected into the world by means of the Logos idea — Deity set working among men, working in power, in wisdom, and in

love. On the other hand, man made to be perfect, in complete harmony with the divine, but separated from his divine source by a process in which he himself had at least a part,—in technical language, by a "sin" of which he was at least partially guilty. And then, between the two, sharing completely the nature of both, the figure of a God-man, Deity *in* humanity, reconciling all antagonisms, abolishing all oppositions, restoring all that had been lost, building up what had fallen down.

There is something in this presentation that appeals readily to the imagination. It touches our sense of justice. It satisfies the craving for a symmetrical adjustment of our complex manhood to the regularity and simplicity of a universal system. It meets also that longing for the personal which has ever been a potent factor in determining the forms of religious expression. It is no wonder that in the struggle of opposing parties to make clear to the understanding the function of Jesus in the world, this scheme should have commended itself as on the whole offering the least difficulties. There were many varieties of Christian philosophy to choose from. The more carefully trained among the early thinkers, the so-called "Gnostics," the "knowing ones" in all their varieties, evolved the most elaborate devices whereby the lost equilibrium of the race was to

be restored. Their command of all the resources of all existing religions was complete, and none was left unemployed in these singular attempts at a Christian philosophy that should once for all settle the vexed questions of the origin, the nature, and the destiny of the human soul. Enough for us here that these attempts, addressed as they were to the trained and informed intellect, found no response in the general consciousness of Christendom.

Hardly better did it fare with those other parallel attempts which under the general name of Montanism set "prophecy" against philosophy, the free working of the Holy Spirit against the formulated processes of a divine mechanism. The idea of the Holy Spirit represented, indeed, a great truth which no one could question or, even for a moment, afford to neglect: the truth of a divine presence and power working as it listed in the hearts of men, defying definitions and formulations, speaking through no established organs, but whenever and wherever it pleased, bringing the truth of God directly to the spiritual comprehension of the faithful. But if the elaborations of Gnosticism were too mechanical to appeal powerfully to the religious desire of a world in labor with redemptive struggles, the "prophetic" dreams of Montanism were too vague to satisfy the longing for clearer intellectual formulations. What

was demanded was something at once precise and simple, free from the extravagances alike of philosophy and of unregulated enthusiasm.

The solution was found, historically, in the doctrine of a redemption through the personality of Christ. In the schemes of the Christian philosophies the person of Christ had entered, as it were, by violence. The schemes themselves were too complete without him. They presented a view of the universe of men and things as something revolving by a sufficient law of its own, which in due time would bring about its "redemption" through the force of its own completeness. The person of Christ came into these cosmic schemes as a kind of importation from the outside, a foreign element, not substantially wrought into their inner structure. The world, one feels in reading them, would have redeemed itself without his aid. His relation to it was dramatic, fictitious and not causal. So it was once again with the idea of redemption under the forms of Montanistic fervor. The doctrine of a continuous revelation or "prophecy" which had always been and always would be to the end of time, pointed indeed to a culmination of humanity, but it was a culmination in which the man Christ had no specific share. No matter how his personality might be glorified in words, the fact remained that his message was only one intermediate

chapter in a long unfolding of the divine law that had gone on before him and would go on after him. It was splendid, but it was not destined to be "Christian." Christianity, under the conditions of the third and fourth centuries, demanded a place for its central figure that should be, not in any sense accidental, but strictly causal. The return of mankind to harmony with the divine will and law must be accomplished through some quality or some achievement peculiar and essential to the personality of Christ.

The quality needed for this purpose was given in the doctrine of the deity of Christ. The achievement was found in the sublime fact of his sacrifice for the race. Given these two factors, and the notion of a redemption by the personality of the God-man seemed to offer precisely the elements called for by the awakened consciousness of the Christian world. It gave in the clearest manner that aspect of causality without which no philosophic explanation was conceivable and no theory of continuous revelation could be made impressive. It satisfied the dramatic requirements of justice. It appealed powerfully to the ever present human instincts of gratitude and loyalty. Best of all it did not make upon the faithful any extravagant demands either of intelligence or of spiritual insight. Once for all it rejected the aid of pure philosophy and placed a check

upon the unregulated enthusiasms of the "prophets" of all time to come.

The element of chief importance in this new scheme of redemption was the idea of sacrifice. Not that this idea in itself was new. On the contrary, it was one of the most ancient conceptions of the process by which a people tried to put itself into right relations with its gods. To give the thing most precious to itself, the firstlings of its herds and its crops, even the dearest of its sons, was to make the gods more favorable, to propitiate their anger or to conciliate their good-will. In every such act there was implied also the idea of a substitution. The victim was, in one sense or another, set in place of the people who had deserved the evil thing averted by his sacrifice. Such a notion of substitution or representation was far commoner than we of our day can really imagine. The wonderful religious system of Egypt, for example, was permeated by it throughout. Its symbolism was not merely an appeal to the picturesque, it was a presentation of realities, more real even than the things of sense. What we should call the world of imagination was to the Egyptian, as to the ancient man in general, the world of reality. The substitution of one being for another was to him as familiar a process as was the adoption of a son into the rights and duties of actual sonship.

One has to transport one's self into this strange world of ancient ideas to make it clear how this notion of substitution came to attach itself to the simple facts of the death of Jesus. The historical element is meagre and plain enough. A Hebrew "prophet" in apparent revolt against the traditions of his own people, fell an easy and natural victim to popular and official hatred. The state, represented by a sceptical, world-weary, provincial governor, refused to save him, and he met bravely, with only that touch of human frailty which makes him wholly our own, the fate he had challenged. That, so far as we know it, is the whole story. Yet this simple and heroic human act of devotion has been incorporated into that vast tissue of confusions we are here trying to understand. It follows the same process of distortion and entanglement we have seen in the whole doctrine as to the life of Jesus. It is at all events a fairly consistent process. Just as in the life of the Master the most simple details became involved in a maze of philosophic speculation until they lost almost the semblance of human experience, so here the simple, majestic fact of a noble death as the crown of an heroic life became obscured with a veil of mystical decoration until it disappeared altogether as an historic fact and became a part in a vast dogmatic scheme of world-evolution.

For, to follow the train of our former study, it was not only a man who died upon the cross. It was God himself who thus made the supreme sacrifice, offering, not only what was most precious to himself, — the son whom he had begotten, — but really also offering himself as an atonement — to himself — for the sin of the world. In all former sacrifices it had been the people through its representative, king or priest, that had made the offering, a willing payment for the good to be gained. But here the people were passive or even hostile. It was the power which needed to be reconciled with his disobedient people that, himself, out of the great love he bore them, made himself even as they were — except the disobedience — and then, to complete the reconciliation, caused himself to die an infamous death. In place of the people doomed to spiritual death is placed the single sacrificial offering, the sinless for the sinful, and by this act the world is redeemed.

Such, in its bare outline and without regard to the variety of detail in which the ingenuity of theologians has involved it, is the historic Christian scheme of redemption. Intended to apply to all men, it was in practice limited to such as should accept it by a half-intellectual and half-emotional conviction of its truth. A great literature and a splendid artistic development were devoted to its presentation before a believing

world. A priesthood, with all the characteristics of its kind, became the mediating agency in applying the "scheme" to the needs of everyday humanity. A sacramental system touching the life of man at all its most impressible moments riveted the circle in which the process of redemption was to move. The great revolt of the sixteenth century which did away at a stroke with the worst bondage of the system, left untouched the theory of sacrificial redemption and thus kept open the way for new and more emphatic demonstrations of its hold upon men's imagination.

In what attitude of mind can the Unitarian approach this question? His first impulse is unquestionably one of impatient and indignant denial. He cannot accept the foundation ideas upon which the historic doctrine of redemption has been built up. To him there is no such thing as a God angry with the race of beings he has created and needing therefore to be reconciled with them by some act of propitiation or of expiation. He is quite capable of understanding the heroic myths of the ancient world, where given mortals at given moments of distress are pictorially represented as devoting themselves for their race and thus bringing back the natural relation with God, the temporary loss of which has brought misfortune — defeat in war, famine, pestilence, or what not. In such appealing forms he recognizes the

expression of a nation's consciousness of wrong as separating it for the moment from the divine sources of its normal power. It has "sinned" in some unknown way, and it cannot recover without in some fashion paying for its sin. That is intelligible. The Unitarian understands it because he believes it himself with all the best there is in him. He is thoroughly convinced that nothing can come of nothing; that every valuable thing, most of all the peace of God, that harmony with the law of all life which is the condition of right living, must be paid for, and paid at a high price. He knows this to be true of the individual life and he believes it equally for the life of a nation or of a race. There is collective "sin" as there is individual "sin," and somehow that sin must be atoned for, or the man, the nation, the race could not go on. It would be swamped in the sea of its own lusts and go under to make place for a new and law-respecting generation. The attitude of the thoughtful Unitarian toward the general idea of redemption is therefore not one of scoffing or of mere denial. He recognizes in it a profound need of human nature. Nay, he will go several steps farther. He will admit that the condition of rebellion against the divine law is always threatening and needs to be guarded against. He believes heartily that Jesus of Nazareth in his teaching has furnished the key to the problem,

and supplied a means whereby the individual and the race may secure the form of redemption best suited to their need. Further, he believes, as the Church has always done, that the process of redemption must be continuous — renewed from point to point in the growth of the man as of the community. He sees in the sacramental system of the Church a representation — to him a heathen and mechanical representation — of a perfectly sound and widely useful idea.

What he denies is that at any specific time, by any specific method, the relation of God to his world was changed. As he denies the specifically and peculiarly divine character of Jesus, so he must deny the possibility of any mysterious influence upon the race arising from that character. The whole argument from the sacrificial death of a divine personality seems to him only so many empty words, signifying nothing unless they be taken in senses contrary to any rational meaning. He understands — no one better — the thought of Jesus giving up his life gladly for a truth that was more to him than life. It is a great and inspiring thought; one that may become fruitful, as it has done, in the struggle of right with wrong whenever a brave soul has faced the alternative and chosen pain and loss and death rather than dishonor. He sees how this brave death may have reacted upon the scattered and doubting

followers, confirming them in their allegiance and kindling in them something of the divine fire that had burned in the heart of their Master. The Unitarian rejoices in all this because he sees in it one more demonstration of the power there is in a human life. If that life were not in every sense human as his own, he can see no point of contact at which power could pass from it into his. It would be as far removed from all vital connection with him as ever were the gods and demigods of the Greek mythology. But, believing as he does that what was possible for one inspired human soul is in substance possible for another, he draws hope and courage from this great example. Believing as he does that the only effective teaching can come from one who has himself learned by experience the lessons he tries to teach, he is able to make his own the lessons of the greatest of moral teachers.

Again, the Unitarian is not impressed by the emphasis laid upon the fact of death as such. He repudiates as childish superstition the notion of physical death as the punishment of the race for that "sin" of its first parents whereby they became acquainted with the fact of their physical function as progenitors of the race. To call that "sin" seems to him the profanation of everything that should be kept holy in the thoughts of men about their place in the universe of things. He sympathizes

heartily with a recent poet who represents the ancient Eve, worn with years and sorrow, wandering back again to the garden of Eden and there, moving in mystic measures around the fateful tree, telling God how, in her heart of hearts, she was glad she did it. He had made her woman, and what she did was done in obedience to the law he had laid upon her by her womanhood. It was not believable that he could have willed her to be what he had made her not to be.

Death is to the Unitarian only the natural and inevitable and therefore the right and happy corollary of life. If there were no death, there could be no room for life. He sees, of course, that in this struggling world death wears many painful shapes; but he sees in this only the natural consequence of struggle. All life, from the simplest to the most complicated forms, is maintained only at the cost of continual conflict. Even the blade of grass has to fight for its life against drought and flood and starvation and the crushing tread of men and animals. If it survives all these and does its service in feeding the flower that is to give the promise of new life in the seed, then it dies like the man who has conquered, full of years and honor, his work done, his release granted. There is nothing in all this that in the least suggests the idea of physical death as a means of attaining spiritual life. The analogy is false.

It is a mere playing with words to say that the death of Jesus restores the balance of humanity and Deity that was lost by the "fall" of Adam. No matter into what modern equivalents the language of the ancient Hebrew cosmic myth may be rendered, there is no room for any such idea in Unitarian thought. The alternation of death and life is continuous and natural. It has no such dramatic moments as are needed to complete the plot of the so-called Christian scheme.

So it is, again, with the notion of a vicarious atonement, the sacrifice of one for the sin of all. Before that idea, as before hardly any other in the historic Christian entanglement, the Unitarian stands in blank incomprehension. It is perfectly clear to him that the heroism which inspires a voluntary sacrifice of pleasant things for a greater good to others is contagious — fruitful in results of faith and courage, perhaps to generations of men. In that fact he sees one of the chief glories of human nature, that it is capable of recognizing such leadership and of following it to even greater triumphs. It is the bond that ties together the choice spirits of all the generations in one continuous succession of noble ideals and at least partial realizations. But what gives to each generation and to each individual its power to meet the forces of evil is not merely the power of the

age or the man that has gone before. From that or from him it receives inspiration and support, but its force comes from the enlightened and disciplined will, which is its own. The sacrifices that went before avail nothing except as each man, in his own day, wins for himself his victories over his own temptation. The whole conception of the sin of one man being atoned for by the virtue of another, the Unitarian repudiates with the same repulsion he feels at the idea that the sin of one man can be imputed as sinfulness to the whole race of men following after. The two ends of the circle of so-called Christian theology seem to him to prove alike the viciousness of the circle itself. The doctrine of a "fall" and of a sacrificial redemption alike contradict his primary and fundamental notions of human nature. On the one hand he asserts as positively as words can do it the capacity of man to do what is right in the sight of God. On the other, he asserts with equal positiveness man's power to maintain his own at-one-ment with God. To him the processes both of estrangement and of at-one-ment go on in every human life continuously and will go on so long as men are men. There will always be shortcoming; but there will always be effective reparation. If there were no shortcoming, men would be angels; if there were no reparation, they would become devils. That, to the Unitarian is the

very definition of life. It is not to him a degrading thought that life is a struggle. On the contrary, it is in the very fact of struggle that he finds the glory of life. The degrading conception to him is that by the act of any other being man should be relieved of any fragment of the responsibility that is his birthright. To have been bought off from the consequences of his own wrong by the sacrifice of some one else appears to him a meanness that in common life would be branded with the scorn of every high-minded man.

We are thus led by perfectly natural steps to the positive Unitarian doctrine of redemption. Against the traditional notions of a race rebellion, whereby man became incapable of acting in harmony with the divine will, Unitarians place the idea of a continuous development of the sense of righteousness through the free will of man — free, that is, to do right as well as wrong. To the traditional doctrine of a single race-restoration by means of a sacrifice on the part of a man who was at the same time God, Unitarians oppose the idea of a continuous victory of right over wrong, whereby the race is held to some attainable standard of harmony with the divine will. For this process of continuous restoration they have the word "*Redemption by Character.*" They think here primarily of individual character and apply that phrase to the race only as it is

made up of individuals. The older theology thought on this matter in terms of race and dealt with individuals chiefly as incidents or specimens of race compact or race endowment.

Unitarianism, here as elsewhere, proceeds from the individual to the general. It conceives of individual character as the resultant of all the forces making for a permanent inclination of the whole being towards a certain ideal. Character may be good or bad according as this inclination be chiefly toward harmony with the divine will or chiefly away from it. Character includes not merely what theologians are wont to call, a little contemptuously, "mere morality." It covers all that complex of motives whereby the thoughts, feelings, and actions of a man are habitually governed. It is the man himself as he meets the daily and hourly demands of his inner and his outward life. If we could imagine a man who allowed himself no thought, no emotion, and no action that was not in obedience to his own highest conception of the divine law, we should say of such a man that he had a "perfect" character. Now the older theology would not accept such a man as coming under the Christian principle of redemption unless he could show in addition some mystical influence of the sacrifice of Christ. Unitarianism declares that this adjustment of the will to the standard of the divine is precisely what

constitutes the following of Christ in its largest and truest sense. The character thus gained and proven and held fast *is* redemption. There is no other worthy definition of the word. It is the redemption of a man's lower self by the domination of his higher self. It is the spiritual redeeming the material, the divine that is in every man redeeming the animal. Or, to turn the process about, character is redemption because it has paid the price of victory. It has cost much, and that to the soul that is redeemed. This soul has paid its own price, the price of continual watchfulness, of unfailing hope, of unflinching courage, of a faith that could not be shaken. The mendicant attitude which society, when freed from clerical control, has rejected in the affairs of the world, the Unitarian refuses also to adopt in matters of the soul. He finds the closest connection of ideas between the sturdy beggary that still dogs the traveller in the streets of Rome and the expiatory performances of "Holy Week." He who is promised something for nothing in religion may be pardoned for trying the same process in his daily life.

From the conception of redemption by character in the individual the Unitarian goes on naturally to the thought of redemption for the race as a whole. The solution here is pointed out in advance by his notion of

the race as made up of individuals. The point may seem at first alike obscure and unimportant. It may seem quite a matter of indifference to the plain thinking man whether he approaches the thought of mankind as made up of individual men or whether he is to think of the individual as being merely a specimen of the genus "man." The reader who has learned something of the terminology of the philosophic schools will recognize, however, that we are speaking here of one of the most profound distinctions in the whole field of human thought. As a mere matter of history, it has made all the difference in the world whether men at given times have been in the habit of starting in their thought from the individual observed fact, and proceeding from that to generalize about classes, species, *genera*, or however else we may describe aggregations of individuals, or whether they have been accustomed to start with the larger general ideas and work down to the individual. It would lead us too far into the field of philosophy if we were to try to make this distinction clear in all its bearings, but we must remember that philosophy is only a large word to describe the mental processes we are all following, whether we know it or not, and the distinction we have come to here is one that determines the thought of us all — even though we may be as innocent of philosophy as M. Jourdain was of prose. We

have already had occasion to remark on the tendency of Christian theology at all times to proceed from the general to the particular. It has rested upon a series of dogmas, the very essence of which was that they were abstract propositions based upon no experience whatever, — defying all experience and demanding allegiance in virtue of their absolute truth, without reference to individual judgment or individual right at all. From this point of view the individual man was merely an incident in a vast world-process that absorbed him in its greater life. He himself disappeared, submerged in the many classifications into which the course of human development had grouped him. Family, clan, nation, state, guild, Church, — these, especially the last, were the headings under which the individual found himself ranged and outside of which he stood in a hopeless isolation.

It cannot, of course, be denied that such classification is in the highest degree useful in fixing the function of the individual as a member of the human family. It is only in these several relations that a man comes to the realization of himself as a man. That is not our present point. What concerns us now is the value of the individual in determining the process of race redemption. According to the method we have just outlined as that of the prevailing Christian theology, the individual can

hardly be thought of as having any part at all in this process. It is all a matter of race compacts, race sacrifice, atonement for the race. All that was really demanded of the individual was that he should accept the terms. The wildest heathen, whose life had been one long series of bloody deeds, was adopted into this race atonement if only he declared his willingness to accept membership in a compact that seemed to offer him an unlimited prospect of further savagery under more promising auspices. The noblest pagan, pattern of all the virtues most lauded as peculiarly Christian, was excluded from the race atonement because he had not sacrificed his individuality and come under the class dictation of a priesthood that had assumed to control the relations of men with God.

Unitarianism proceeds by precisely the opposite method. It fixes its attention primarily upon the individual. It does not conceive of a man merely as an incident in the world-mechanism. It knows that he *is* that, but it thinks of him as related to the world process through the working out of his own individuality. It has its own lofty conceptions of the function of the family, the state, the Church, mankind even, in bringing about that development which is to it the ultimate goal of humanity. It feels the force of the reaction of all these upon the individual as fixing his aims, setting

his limitations, giving him his opportunities; but still more powerfully it feels that these larger entities have meaning and value only as they are fixed by the character of the individuals who compose them. What is the family? It is an aggregate of persons held together by the tie of blood, that children may know their parents and be cared for by them; that the aged may be saved from misery; that the collective property may be held together and guarded and thus a centre for new human activities be created and maintained. But what if the man will not work, the woman will not save, the children will not learn and, as they come to years, will not bear their share of the collective burden? Then the family, instead of being a true unit in the world's economy, breaks up into a mere group of individuals each seeking his own pleasure in his own way. Its effectiveness as a social and moral unit depends absolutely upon the fidelity of each member to the highest standards of individual character. So it is with the state. What is that but a larger aggregation of persons bound by the tie of common economic and social interests so that right may be secured, needed public works undertaken, peace and liberty guaranteed by force, and the higher ideal aims of humanity fostered? But what if the individual citizen refuses to play his part; if he will not enter into public life; will not give voice and vote for

the best things? Or what if rulers see in power only a means to self-aggrandizement, or if subjects refuse to bear the burdens laid upon them by their rulers, or if men deliberately seek to corrupt the public conscience by appealing to the lowest instead of the highest instincts of humanity? Then the state means nothing but a mere mechanical union that will break as soon as pressure comes on a weak point. It will resolve itself into groups of struggling individuals without order, without progress, and without aims.

And it is the same with the Church. That too is a community of persons held together by the tie of a common faith. It exists in order that that faith may be kept alive and may manifest itself in works that make for righteousness. It claims to stand within all other forms of human organization as their inspiring, uplifting, spiritualizing force. It demands, as no other association of men does, the absolute surrender of its members to its ideals and its purposes. But what if the individual man is lacking in that personal faith that is the very foundation of a religious life; if he just slips along easily in the ready forms of observance, repeating words and formulas he does not really believe, going through the motions of religion without the inner impulse that must give unity and continuity to his experiences? Or what if those who, by the accidents of

history, have come into control of religious organization and who direct the forms of religious experience come to think of themselves as having rights superior to those of other believers; if they impose their ordinations, their sacraments, their organized ignorance and superstition upon their less well-trained brothers; if they would harness the Holy Spirit into the service of their own caste and crush every attempt of unauthorized desire to come to the sources of spiritual life without their aid? Then the Church ceases to be a true and effective unit in the life of the community. Its members will become mere mechanical, inorganic atoms without real satisfaction for themselves or usefulness to others. The Church can have a meaning only as each individual member is honest in his belief, free in his conscience, steadfast in well-doing and brave in meeting the assaults of temptation. If he is all these, then the Church is strong. If weakness and selfishness and corruption creep in, then the corrupt Church, like the corrupt family or state, has no meaning that the world is bound to respect.

Now that is what we mean when we say that the Unitarian fixes his attention above all things on the individual. He knows well enough the reactions that may come to every man from the larger units in which he is involved. It is a good thing to belong to a family

that has a good name for doing well the things for which the family stands in the world's work. It gives to the man a background for effort and a reason for hope and courage. It is a help to be born in a city where high ideals of public life prevail and a man's own effort is carried along with the current of popular approval. It sustains one's faith to know that it is shared by a great association which speaks to the individual with the weight of precedent and the sanctity of an honorable past. But the very essence of this reaction of the institution upon the individual comes in every case from the same source, namely, from the accumulated power of earlier individuals who have made the institution worth having. Let the individual fall back upon the institution as the real basis of his own relation to the world; let him once say: "Because I belong to this family, or to this city, or to this Church, *therefore* I can afford to allow myself a relaxation of diligence which would be unsafe for another," and he is lost. The value of membership in the community is realized only when it is paid for by the steady maintenance of the value of every member.

So it is that the Unitarian reaches his doctrine of a race redemption. It is to his mind no process of fatalistic rotation, so that, after passing through certain mystic "cycles" of advancement, the race shall be re-

volved around into the condition of perfection in which it started. Nor is it a process prescribed at any one given moment of human progress, set going by any one event, or completed under the direction of any human organization, even though that organization claims to be divine. The redemption of the race comes only through the redemption of individuals, and that comes only through the redeeming force of personal character. It is not a culmination in time, such as we have been accustomed to imagine. The Unitarian does not look either backward or forward to an age of general and universal acquiescence in the will of God. His golden age is not to be found in any Garden of Eden where men were not yet men, nor in any New Jerusalem where they shall be no longer men. His golden age of humanity is found wherever, in the conflict of the world, right prevails over wrong, light over darkness, truth over falsehood, love over hate. Every man at once contributes to and shares in the race redemption when he, in his own personal conflict, comes out victorious. He is never so far redeemed that he is exempted from that law of struggle which is the law of all life; neither is the race ever redeemed beyond the need of continual defence against temptation to wrong.

This conclusion will perhaps to many persons have a painful sound, as implying an incompleteness, a one-

sidedness in the scheme of things which they cannot associate with the idea of a well-ordered universe. The Unitarian does not take that view of it, because to him there is nothing depressing in the notion of incompleteness. He does not accept the law of struggle as a gloomy misfortune to be taken in a spirit of resignation or despair. On the contrary, the law of struggle seems to him the law of happiness. The depressing thought to him is the idea of completeness, — of a perfection that should leave nothing more to be done; no heights to climb, no battles to win, no weakness to be overcome, no distress to be relieved. It would be to him like the wretchedness of the very rich, to whom, because all satisfactions are within reach no true satisfaction is possible. Redemption by Character, first of the individual, and then, through the natural groupings of individuals, of society as a whole; this is the ideal that to the Unitarian embodies the most elevating, the most stimulating, and the most rewarding of human conceptions.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH

One holy Church of God appears
Through every age and race,
Unwasted by the lapse of years,
Unchanged by changing place.

— *Samuel Longfellow.*

THERE are three conceptions of the Christian Church, which at different times have determined its form, have influenced its doctrines, and greatly affected its value to mankind. Within these three principal ideas there have been infinite diversities of detail; but, for our present purpose, the definition of Unitarian thought about the Church, this threefold distinction will suffice. For the sake of simplicity, we may use the words Esoteric, Catholic, and Individualistic to express what is most characteristic in each. It may be said with truth that the ultimate purpose of the Church under all of these divergent forms is the same. It is the advancement of humanity toward the final consummation of the Christian ideal as expressed in the supreme vision of a "kingdom of God." As to this ultimate purpose there can be no important difference among the many divisions into which the Church has always fallen. The

divisions have taken place according to that law of all human things whereby men left to themselves will inevitably differ as to the best means of attaining a common end. It is a law not to be deplored, but to be utilized. In obedience to it is found the liberty of the sons of God. Defiance of it begets subtly but surely the twin spirits of servility and oppression. Honest thought has always produced divisions. It is by division that the main organism has been strengthened; as a plant, whose roots have become so hopelessly entangled as to force out the life-giving earth, recovers vitality by being divided and thus brought again into contact with the sources of its life. The life of the Church has not been exempt from this universal law. From the beginning it has followed certain fairly well-marked lines of division, and these have resulted in the threefold distinction we have laid down.

Let us examine a little more carefully the three terms we have employed to express these divisions. The esoteric idea of the Church implies the notion of a twofold membership. In such a Church there is an ordinary membership for the great bulk of its constituents and a special membership for an inner circle of elect spirits. The qualification for admission to this inner circle may be of any imaginable sort. In fact it has usually been determined on one or the other of two decisive grounds.

Its basis has been either an intellectual or a spiritual one. In either case the elect members were supposed to be persons of highly superior endowment or training, or both. They constituted an *élite* of the intellect or of the spirit in such a commanding sense that to them and to them alone could safely be entrusted the occult something, to preserve which was the main purpose of the Church itself. Hardly had the Church begun to be conscious of its own existence when these distinctions began to make themselves felt. In the long effort to determine just how the new thought of Christians should express itself, groups of choice spirits — the "best minds," as we should say — imagined that they could work out a philosophic system superior to all the ancient philosophies, that would once for all replace them and satisfy the new demand. These were the "knowing ones," the Gnostics, as they called themselves. They were soon divided under various forms, but were united in this one central idea of an occult doctrine to be embodied in a special company of the intellectually elect who constituted the truest part of the true Church. With their doctrines we are not concerned; only with their idea as to the outward structure of the visible Church.

It was, further, quite consistent with this manifestation — the same thing has happened over and over

again in the history of human thought — that parallel with this intellectual esotericism there should grow up also another esotericism of the emotions. As in the one case there was an inner circle of experts distinguished by learning and philosophic skill, so in the other case there was an inner circle of specially endowed spiritual persons. Their insight into truth came not from an intellectual process, but from that kind of direct revealing which expressed itself by the word "prophecy." An accident of history caused these views of the "prophetic" Church to be known as Montanism, and so they have been called ever since in their many reappearances from then till now. Their essential kinship with the Gnostic views, so far as the nature of the Church is concerned, is evident. If either or both of these tendencies had prevailed, we should have had a Church essentially divided into the two permanent classes of the initiated and the uninitiated. There would have been an aristocracy of the intellect or of the spirit and, over against this, the mass of average Christians, imperfect in their comprehension, limited as to their share in the Christian life on earth and equally limited in its final rewards.

Against this conception of the Church as a secret society of perfectionists either in doctrine or in practice was made the splendid protest of the early and true

Catholicism. The Catholic position was that, in harmony with the nature of man as an imperfect being, any such distinction of endowment could not be made the basis of a permanent classification of Christian believers. At any given moment, to be sure, there were obvious differences among men in these respects; but, since the work of Christ had been for all men alike, these differences were only accidental, not essential. The Church consisted of all men, perfect or imperfect, — or, rather, there were none perfect either in knowledge or in life, and the work of the Church was to educate men up constantly from a lower to a higher grade of spiritual thinking and living. Every person properly received into the Christian membership was a full member entitled to share in all its privileges and subject to all its responsibilities. That was the orginal Catholicism. It was an idea full of significance for the future. If it could have been maintained in this early purity, the history of Christianity would have been different. That it was not so maintained is one of the commonplaces of religious history. The idea itself was, indeed, never lost. It remained to restrain and at times to justify the action of organized Catholicism; but, as the Church came to be identified with society as a whole, the principle of universality became a principle of tyranny. Divergence from the doctrine or the practice

of the Church in ever so slight a degree became rebellion against a divine order. Individuality, either of the intellect or of the spirit, became the worst of crimes, punishable by exclusion from privileges here, which entailed exclusion from the rewards of the life to come. While the Church still declared its mission to be the education of the race to higher spiritual standards, it ignored the law which makes the education of the whole dependent upon the free development of the individual. The Church, from being the schoolmaster, became, as unwise schoolmasters have too often become, a tyrant, drawing absolute lines within which the human spirit might move, but beyond which lay disaster.

Happily, however, the human spirit will not be kept down. The protest against this perversion of the true function of Catholicism was never wanting. It required centuries before that individuality which is of the essence of the ancient Greco-Roman civilization could be repressed. Even then, when, in the decline of the ancient culture, the control of thought had passed into the hands of a dominant priesthood, keen, as priesthoods ever have been, to seize its own advantage and ally itself with physical force to accomplish its divine mission, — even in the darkest times of the miscalled "ages of faith," the record of silent, courageous protest is unbroken. The Reformation, from the fourteenth cen-

tury on, is but the cry of this protest becoming articulate once more in the voices of men who were not afraid to go back to what they conceived to be the pure sources of Christian thought and practice. The Reformation was not the proclamation of new doctrines, nor the foundation of new practices. It was the protest against the idea of a Church which had come to obscure thought and make of practice a mere mechanical repetition of vain things.

In the reconstructions of the Reformation it was inevitable that the same old antagonisms that had marked the beginnings of Christianity should declare themselves again. Once more the threefold alternative of the esoteric, the universal, and the individualistic presented itself, and each had its following. There were those who dreamed, as sanguine souls have been dreaming to this day, of a reformed Catholicism, so that the ancient vision of a single, united Christianity might be realized at last. Others, legitimate descendants of the early perfectionist sects, fancied the time had come for a kingdom of God on earth in the hands of a few chosen instruments, through whose gradual increase the reign of the carnal man should cease and the reign of the spiritual man be established forever. The former of these ideals, the reformation of Catholicism from within, without disturbing its fundamental principle of univer-

sality, had been thoroughly tried out. One after another, preachers and prophets, from Arnold of Brescia to Savonarola, had thundered against evils which were largely due to the very idea of universality they professed themselves still eager to uphold. Again and again men had banded themselves together into vast associations, each a new protest against the worldliness and neglect of a church whose most devoted supporters they still declared themselves to be. One after another, men of enlightenment had shown the way to liberty, only to protest at the end that nothing they might say should be taken as in any way reflecting upon that authority of the Church which their whole lives had been given to weakening. It had been thoroughly tried and men had had enough of it.

Nor, on the other hand, were the men of the sixteenth century to be stampeded into any wild schemes of perfectionism. If Romanism was bad, the reign of the "Free Spirit" promised to be infinitely worse. It was fortunate for the sanity of the early Reformation that its more radical elements, with their noble enthusiasms, their irresistible logic, and their undaunted courage, should have had full chance to show their most extravagant tendencies. It was a warning and an example at once. It was a warning not to push all ideas to their logical extreme; but it was an example also of deter-

mined insistence upon essential things, even to the sacrifice of the principle of unity.

So it came about once more in the history of the Church that the friction of the three fundamental ideas ended in the prevalence of one of them. Only now it was not the idea of unity but the idea of individuality that prevailed over the other two. One of the most dramatic moments in early Reformation history is when, in the year 1529, Luther was called upon to negotiate with the Swiss reformers with a view to forming a Protestant Union. The temptation from every worldly point of view was almost overwhelming. Nearly the whole of Northern Germany, with the Scandinavian countries at its back, a great part of Southern Germany and Eastern Switzerland, had already declared for the Great Revolt. If they had chosen to stand together, reaching out a hand toward France, Italy, Austria, the Low Countries, wherever men were inclining toward their ideas, it seemed, humanly speaking, as if they might make themselves irresistible and dictate terms to Papacy and Empire alike. A great international Protestant League might have provided the principle of formal unity that seemed necessary to set over against the still imposing unity of Catholicism. In this crisis Luther saw the danger and faced it with his customary boldness and more than his usual disregard of logical

consistency. "These men" he said of the Swiss, who were ready to make great concessions for unity, "are of another spirit." He was willing to let them go their way provided he and his were free to go theirs. He would not persecute; but he would not be bound. The word was spoken, and now for four hundred years Protestantism has lived up to it. The Protestant churches have been the clearest expression of what we have called the sectarian or individualistic theory of the Christian Church. They have often been accused of having sacrificed the principle of Christian unity; but they have shown their essential kinship by maintaining the great doctrine of *the right to differ*,—not always consistently or with good grace. We are not to forget the lamentable history of Protestant persecution. But the fact remains that the world owes its present freedom from religious oppression to the balancing of independent sects which is the direct result of the Protestant principle. Let any one infallible church of authority get control of any community and the temper of persecution, always lurking in the dark corners of human society, will certainly have its turn again.

This historical introduction has seemed necessary that we may indicate more clearly the relation of Unitarian thought on this subject to that which preceded it. Unitarians acknowledge their debt to all three of the

tendencies we have been describing. They are Catholic in that they believe in the conception of the Church as a great, all-inclusive community of men working, each in his own way, for the realization of that kingdom of God which was the beginning and the end of the mission of Jesus. They think of the Church as an educative agency and would therefore admit to it all who in sincerity desire to share its usefulness in bringing men to a fuller sense of their obligation to the higher life. They sympathize also with the movements we have classified as "esoteric" in their notion of a direct dealing of God with the souls of men without the intervention of priesthood or sacramental observances. The idea of the Holy Spirit working where it will, uttering itself through fitting agencies and independent of human devices, attracts them at many points. But most of all Unitarians are heart and soul Protestant in their acceptance of the principle of individualism as the natural basis of Church organization. They are not alarmed at all by the obvious criticism that individualism is the mere negative of all organization, and that the result of their attitude would be to make every man a church by himself. They trust human nature too much to take alarm at that. Quite as strong as the tendency to self-assertion in man is the tendency to associate. Individualism, as Unitarians understand it,

implies also free association of like thinking men. The essential thing to their mind is that the thinking should come first and the associating afterward. The association should represent the honest, individual, independent thought and experience of its members. It should not dictate to them how they should think or feel. The doctrine of the association is the expression of the sincere conviction of its members. Its practice is the sum of the outward observances which they believe to be helpful in furthering their life as Christian men. Every such association has the right to call itself and to be called *a* church. The aggregate of such churches constitutes *the* Church, and Unitarians will accept no other definition of it. They reject with decision the description of the Church as a "realistic" entity, into which every individual form of Christian organization must somehow be fitted, — as if there were some absolute standard of what a church ought to be. They conceive of a church as distinguished, for example, from a philanthropic organization, by having for its object the furtherance of the Christian religious life. It may combine with this many other things, — works of charity, educational enterprises, social objects, — any good thing whatever; but these do not make its character as a church. That comes wholly from its religious side, and failing this it would be only a social club. Its problem is

to see to it that these other activities do not come to stand by themselves as something apart from its religious life. They must flow from this and must find their support in it. On the other hand, the religious side of the Church may find in these practical applications the most tangible proofs of its own value to the world.

The Unitarian is not blind to the dangers of this view of the Church. He is aware of the extravagances into which the sectarian spirit may lead. He knows the long and unedifying history of how seemingly unimportant differences have been magnified into dissensions that have turned men's minds away from the essential unities of the religious life. He sees all this and would gladly do what he can to limit it. It would be a blessing indeed if now minor differences could be ignored and men could unite upon the larger unities. But, in the first place, what are minor differences? — who is to determine them? To set up any tribunal outside the churches themselves would be to destroy that principle of independence as against all authority which is the corner-stone of the Unitarian's thought on this whole subject. We used the phrase "seemingly unimportant" advisedly, for men have strangely been moved to religious and moral, even to intellectual activity, on questions which, in what seems the larger light of our own thought, would appear quite unworthy of serious

attention. No doubt pettinesses of many kinds have been engendered by these controversies; but the Unitarian feels that in any case activity is better than sloth, and the very narrowness of the discussions has made them fruitful as a training in rational thought. As between the dangers of overzealous sectarian controversy and those of any single dominant authority, Unitarians would unhesitatingly choose the former. They see, as a matter of history, that wherever thought has been free to move as it would, there men have generally worked themselves out from the limitations of a narrow environment. True progress in human thought has always come in this way and in no other. If men are free to change the forms of their expression of faith, that faith is sure to be kept always abreast of the world's best thought. If a man cannot find room to expand in one connection, he seeks another and knows that he is not thus proving himself recreant to the faith, but is rather giving it a deeper, because a more sincere, loyalty. On the other hand, if to secure a formal unity a man is compelled to sacrifice any essential conviction, he finds himself sinking ever deeper and deeper into a tangle of compromises, in which, if he think at all, he will finally become ingulfed. From such confusion there is no escape except in general indifference or intellectual sloth.

Still further; if the Unitarian approves division into groups according to the real differences in state of mind which actually do exist among men, so, when it comes to the question of order within the group, he is equally steadfast in his defence of individuality. Among the various polities which have been tried within the Church, he declares unhesitatingly in support of the principle of Congregationalism. He goes back to the original declaration: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That is the Unitarian ideal of a Church — two or three or a thousand, gathered in sincere desire to live the Christian life as they can understand it, — not asking any one else what that life may be, but having their own working agreement as to how they may best bring it to its full expression. In that body rests the law of its own organization. It may choose its own ministers and may ordain them by as valid a title as any that ever existed. It must provide for their honorable maintenance, so long as they devote themselves heartily to its welfare. It may fix the conditions of its own membership and may apply to its members such discipline as may seem good to itself. It may determine the forms of its own worship, using such as may seem to it best adapted to kindle reverence and to stimulate an enlightened morality. There is no limit to the freedom with which this sover-

eign congregation may provide for what seem to it the best religious interests of its members.

But now once more it will be charged that Unitarianism must issue in a defiant but sterile individualism, each congregation, if not hostile, at least indifferent, to its neighbor. Such has not been the history of Congregationalism. Here again the Unitarian has faith in the instinct of human nature which leads men to associate when they may do so freely and without surrender of their own souls. The sovereign congregation will unite with others of its kind, and the union will be all the stronger because it comes from below and within, not from above and without. But, it will be said, in such a union as this there must be continual discussion as to the best ways of accomplishing ends, even though all are fairly united as to what these ends ought to be. That is true, and in such discussion the Unitarian finds, not a defect, but a virtue of the Congregational principle. In the Church, as in civil society, nothing is perfect. Vitality can be maintained only by a continual striving toward better and more effective methods. Discussion, experiment, sometimes failure, are the agencies whereby the world of human things moves. If we try to exclude them by subjecting the individual man, congregation, group, to the authority of any one man or any select body of men, we quench the spirit at its source.

Such is the Unitarian's Constitution, the only canon-law to which he will subject himself, the law of a free association, making its own statutes, but conforming these always to the great common law of liberty. It will be evident from all that has been said, that the thing most repugnant to the Unitarian is ecclesiasticism in all its forms. This is not to say that he is not sensitive to the charm which lies in a great tradition or that he cannot appreciate the force that comes from concentration of power. What repels him from ecclesiasticism is the feeling that in the things of the spirit there is no room for such considerations. He goes back in this, as in every other matter, to the beginning and seeks there in vain for any suggestion of a Church in the sense of a later time. There is for him no more instructive moment in the history of the Church than that crisis in its affairs when the immediate followers of the Master were brought face to face with the most important question that has ever called for answer in Christian terms. The Hebrew pupils of the Hebrew prophet were already divided as to whether or no the message they had received might be shared in full measure with men of alien blood to whom the Hebrew traditions of law and of faith meant nothing or less than nothing. The discussion was long and bitter. It had obviously reached out to include not only jealousies

of race, but jealousies of place and rank as well. It was threatening the very life of the infant community, when Paul, Hebrew indeed, but man first, guided it into the way of friendly conference, not appealing to any authority except the spirit of the Teaching they all professed to follow, but frankly taking the way of compromise. It was the first great recognition of the right to differ as the true foundation of that Christian unity which is not uniformity, but rather the expression of the innermost spirit of truth-seeking and truth-telling.

The claim of any group of men to control the fortunes of all the followers of Christ seems to the Unitarian a monstrous perversion of the teaching of the Master. He cannot recognize the right of any one authority to define the limits of Christian membership, to fix the forms of Christian worship, to declare articles of belief and enforce their acceptance, least of all, to say how far men may go in using their minds in the study of truth. All that is what the word "ecclesiasticism" represents to him. It expresses the idea of the institution absorbing the man instead of the man making the institution. Even historically he finds that the institution came through the activity of individuals. That there was a "Church" before there were any Christians, a divine abstraction to be realized only when men came to be organized in a certain prescribed fashion, — this

"realistic" conception of a Church he repudiates as a puerile device, adopted after the fact and in order to maintain a mechanism that had come to seem a divine necessity. It would be easy in this connection to enlarge upon the baser motives of ecclesiasticism — the pride of priestly rank, the enjoyment of special privilege, the lust of power, the arrogance of religious conceit that are the stock in trade of "evangelical" criticism of ecclesiasticism, but, as the Unitarian desires to be judged by his best, so he is willing to judge others by their best. He will give all credit to the honest conviction of the "Church" that it is a specially divine institution, complete from the beginning, and free only in the sense that it may employ continually new devices to keep men's souls from wandering away from this one appointed path to safety. He tries to respect its honest belief that it is the special depositary of certain truths which it alone may interpret to the understanding of successive generations of men. He cannot repress even a certain admiration for the ingenuity it has displayed in finding supports for these honest convictions in its own precedents and in the processes of its own historical development. The Unitarian is impressed, as every one must be, by the extraordinary continuity of force in these traditions; but, as himself an honest man, he can only say that he believes these honest people to be

mistaken, and he will not run the risks of subjecting himself to the dangers involved in trying to fit himself to their methods.

Above all, the Unitarian is repelled by the notion of an authority in religion conveyed from one generation to another by a mysterious process of initiation which rests not upon the character and capacity of the individual, but, in the last resort, upon the perfection of the process itself. The "apostolic succession," the most imposing of institutions to the ecclesiastical mind, is to him as repellent in theory as he believes it to be evil in practice. Giving all due credit to the desire of the Church to provide itself with a learned and virtuous ministry, he cannot forget that those functions of the minister which are declared to be the most important, the due administration of certain prescribed "sacramental" rites, do not derive their sanction at all from his personal qualifications, but solely from the regularity of his ordination. It seems to the Unitarian inevitable that, under these circumstances, the emphasis of importance in religious things should be misplaced. Men must come to believe that the all-important thing for them is regularity and that their own individual character is comparatively of little account. He thinks he sees in history every evidence that this has been the case. With all its pretence of a divine commission, the

apostolically qualified priesthood never succeeded in keeping itself clean for any great length of time. Its history is one long record of decline and recovery, and its recovery has invariably been due to a pressure from some source not claiming any specially divine sanction, from the outraged common-sense of the community, from "prophets" who could not be silenced, or from the organized governments of Christian states whose rights had been invaded. If such has been the history of dominant ecclesiasticism, the Unitarian sees no reason why similar results should not follow in the future and he is not willing to take the risks.

If it were solely a question of the one great organization which stands or falls by its apostolic succession, the case would be simpler. Unitarians could then simply go their way and let the "Church" go hers. The issue would be clear and each side would know its friends. Unfortunately the issue is no longer so clear. The appeal of uniformity as against diversity, of authority as against the spirit, — or, rather, of authority as alone in possession of the spirit, — and of tradition as against independent judgment, — this appeal has gained greatly in force. While men have seemed to be approaching the Unitarian position by many ways, approaching it so nearly as almost to have reached it, there has been an equally marked tendency to appropriate

the results of Unitarian independence and courage in the service of uniformity. The language and forms and much of the sentiment of long-abandoned ecclesiasticism have been revived and men have hailed the coming of a near day when once again Catholicism — only now a genuine Catholicism of all "good men," without reference to differences of "opinion" — should unite the Christian world to new triumphs of the faith. It has been a very tempting prospect. Not a few Unitarians have been carried away by it. The old war-cries of the earliest centuries have been heard again. "The Church," "uniformity," "authority," "ordination," "sacraments," "discipline" have been combined with many others borrowed from other dominant interests of our day, — "coöperation," "combination," "together," — to form a complex of ideas that may well have confused many a steady head. Ecclesiasticism has been at hand to profit by all this. "Here," it has said, "is the remedy. Let us sink all differences and go on together against the common foes of our present-day society." That is a very seductive invitation, but the reply of Unitarianism is clear and unmistakable.

It asks first: Who are these foes? If they are moral enemies, then Unitarians see no reason why men cannot unite in warfare against them without sacrificing one particle of their present forms of religious associa-

tion. They are prepared to lend a hand in every good cause, and they feel that readiness to join in such common endeavor is precisely one of the very best tests of the value of any religious organization. Any "church" which holds itself aloof from the common service of the community, lest it compromise itself in the eyes of some authority on which it depends, condemns itself as unworthy of the name it claims a superior right to bear. In any such friendly rivalry of Christian service Unitarians do not fear comparison with any other branch of the universal Church. But are these the foes against whom Unitarians are invited to join by those who, claiming to be the sole lawful representatives of the Church, will accept them if only they will so far modify their interpretation of certain fundamental teachings of Christianity as to adopt the formulas of faith and conform to the outward practices of the body that invites them? Unitarians do not think so. They think they are being invited to war against far different foes. They suspect that under the guise of a desire for peace they are being tempted to turn against some of their own most cherished allies. They do not regard it as a small thing to give up their precious right to differ, even to the bitter end, on such deep-going questions as, for instance, salvation for humanity through a specific incarnation of deity in a given man at a given time, or

the meaning of the future of humanity as certified by the fact of a specific resurrection from the dead. They would seem to be declaring war against their own intelligence and their own honesty and shirking the solemn responsibility laid upon them by the possession of minds and consciences to use these to their best ability in the highest problems of the spiritual life. They dread any alliance, however alluring, that may turn them ever so little against these most precious of gifts. They would rather stand alone outside of all religious organization than enter upon compromises in which they must inevitably sacrifice what gives them their special right to be. They do not fear that the world will ever suffer for lack of readiness to fall in with attractive promises of apparent harmony. What they do fear is that men may grow careless as to real distinctions of thought and of spiritual character, and they desire to contribute what they can toward making those distinctions clear and significant. They are willing to believe in the moral sincerity of all good men, no matter what their religious confession; but they feel also that any decline from absolute individual integrity of thought is pretty certain to be reflected in a corresponding weakness of moral fibre. The ancient proposition that "heresy," *i.e.* independent thought, implies a certain moral delinquency seems to them quite as true when applied the other way

round. At all events they may perhaps be pardoned if they prefer to take the moral risks of independence rather than those of conformity.

To sum it up: Unitarians believe in a church, and they wish it might always be a holy and a catholic one. They will contribute all they have of holiness and catholicity to bring this to pass; but they will not assume that any single form of the Church is holier or more catholic than another on the strength of its own assertions or in virtue of any pretended "apostolic" continuity. They believe that a church can be holy only in so far as its members are leading holy lives and they place their primary emphasis upon such holiness of living. They believe in a catholicity that expresses itself not in outward unity or uniformity but in the spirit of charity towards all and in the humility which is willing to learn of all whatever worthy thing they have to teach. They believe that this catholicity is best attained, not in the historically "Catholic" way, but in the Protestant way, and they are therefore firmly and consistently Protestant, not shirking the responsibility which that word imposes, but taking it up gladly and doing what they can to give it a positive realization. They believe in individuality as the primary condition of all successful organization, and they are Congregationalists in their church constitu-

tion because they believe Congregationalism to be the form of association which gives at once freest play to the individual and the soundest basis for effective combination.

CHAPTER VIII

WORSHIP

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

— *James Montgomery.*

UNITARIANISM, we have already seen, is a religion, not a philosophy, nor a system of morals. It aims to be a religion that can be defended on sound philosophical principles, and it hopes to express itself in a practical morality that will bear the test even of hostile criticism. But its philosophy is only an instrument to keep a rational balance between the emotions, which are the true basis of all religion, and the thinking mind, which is equally a part of man's divine endowment. Its morality is the perfect and natural flowering out into conduct of this harmony between mind and feeling. At the centre, as source alike and end, is the religious impulse, the natural outreaching of the human heart to something higher than itself, — a something by which it can explain itself and the universe of being that surrounds it, — something towards which it can express its sentiments of gratitude for the well-being it experiences;

of desire for the things it lacks; and of reverence for the beneficence and power it recognizes. This religious impulse, universal, so far as we know, among men would seem to be the most purely personal of emotions, reflecting each man's own instincts of love and hate, of fear and desire. Yet, the farther back we go, the more we find religion an affair, not of the individual, but of the community, the family, the clan, the race, the nation. As the individual finds himself in all other relations a part of the social organism, so in religion. The thing greater than himself takes form in the tribal deities, the mediators between the great unknown and his little world of the known.

The dealings with the unseen powers pass into the hands of "experts" of one sort or another, and so the priesthoods of the world have arisen. Their function has been to speak for the people with the gods, to give voice to the desires, the passions, at times to the sorrows and the repentance, of the community. In turn they have come to shape and guide these feelings. The community has been bound to certain prescribed forms of expression for its emotions, and the priesthoods, as administrators of these forms, have come to exercise supreme control over religion and to extend their sway over every detail of the associated life of men. The dealing of men with the gods has seemed to overlook

the individual and put the community altogether in his place. Only now and then, with great spiritual awakening, some leader has arisen — Buddha, Socrates, Jesus, Mohammed, Luther, Wesley — and has called men back sharply to the sense of their own personal right and duty, — their right to deal directly, face to face, with their God, their duty so to exercise this right that mankind shall be the braver and purer for it. Their call has been heard; the priesthoods have drawn back into their corners and bided their time; but their time has never again been quite like the old times. Even though the early zeal of reform has cooled and the old instincts have led to new forms of spiritual tyranny, still the ancient trammels have never sat quite so heavily as before upon the individual mind and conscience. Some part of the people has become fully emancipated, and the rest, in spite of their conformity, have gained great advantages from the freedom they cannot or will not share.

We are concerned here with two opposite theories of the thing we call "worship," but which might better be called "the approach to God"; for by worship we do not here mean merely or primarily that glorifying of the divine name which may so easily run over into a formal ceremony, a "worshipping with men's hands as though He needed anything." We mean rather by

worship the whole attitude of the soul toward God and only secondarily its expression in outward forms. These two theories may be defined as the sacramental and the spiritual. From the beginning of the Church these words have represented a continuous conflict. On the one hand we have had the great declaration of the Master that the God who is spirit must be worshipped in spirit. On the other, we have had the immense weight of organized Christianity thrown solidly in support of carefully worked out systems in the hands of a class claiming for itself a divine commission to guide the souls of men in their approach to God. Wherever the sacramental theory of worship has prevailed, the spiritual theory has come to be regarded with peculiar detestation. To come to God without the agency of the organized mechanism of the Church has been treated as the worst of crimes. If we examine the most flagrant cases of Christian persecution, we shall find that whatever was the nominal pretext, the real offence was this: that the individual had been guilty of presenting himself without proper introduction, as it were, before the being whom he believed to be his maker and his friend. On the other hand, whenever the spiritual view of worship has found vigorous expression, it has always been against the sacramental system that it has protested most loudly and most persistently. We are dealing

here, therefore, with one of the most profound antagonisms of the religious consciousness, and it is worth while to examine it a little more closely.

The essence of the sacramental theory of worship lies in the idea that there is an essential opposition between man and God, a gulf that is to be bridged, a sin that is to be atoned, an anger that is to be appeased, a discord that is to be harmonized. However far we may seem to be removed from primitive notions of sacrifice, this is the idea which under one or another form runs through all "sacramental" processes. A something is to be *done* which requires on our part a specific effort directed to a specific end. We no longer sacrifice our children or our first-fruits, but we are asked to believe that, through accepting a supreme sacrifice on the part of a being who was one of ourselves at the same time that he was actually God, we are taking part in a sacrifice as real as any ever performed. It is true that this sacramental idea of worship was profoundly modified at the great Reformation. "Anti-sacramentalism" was one of the catchwords of the reforming parties. "No mediator but Christ" was the battle cry that rallied the armies of the North against papal domination. Still, the idea of opposition between God and man has remained, and, in the general shading off of differences which is the tendency of our time, it has taken on new

and more subtly attractive forms. Its grosser aspects have been toned down to meet the advance of freer thought. Ritualism has been presented as after all only a means of satisfying a natural human desire for form and of avoiding the crudities and extravagances of individual effort. We are reminded that liturgical repetition appeals to a certain instinct of the human heart. Forms, we are told, are valuable as aids to the spirit. Through forms of ritual our minds are removed from the ordinary processes of logical reckoning and guided gently into the channels of spiritual reflection. The attitude of the soul in worship should be as far as possible removed from that of our non-worshipping hours. We should cultivate the sense of form even in the outward circumstances of worship. The very place, the enclosure of the four walls, should be in a special sense "consecrated" by some specific act on the part of some recognized authority. The words there spoken should be authorized in such a way that those who hear them may be safe from the scandal of individual whim or fancy. Even the tone in which they are uttered should be "elevated" above that of every day. It should be as far as possible dehumanized and made like the tone of a mechanical instrument lest the thought of the individual intrude itself upon the worshipping multitude. Especially should the words of sacred Scripture

be read in a voice deprived of all semblance of humanity, so that no particle of personal suggestion or interpretation may mar its divine perfection. In a word we are asked to believe that the most perfect and most acceptable worship is that in which the individual disappears most completely because he has sunk himself in the common impulse of surrender to the external influences of a once powerful tradition. This kind of persuasion is the more subtle because it contains a measure of truth. It is true that we are all sensitive in greater or less degree to the influences of form, and that the repetition of words as meaningless as "Mesopotamia" has its effect upon our imagination. It must be a dull mind indeed that does not respond to the incommunicable suggestions of the Gothic Cathedral, or thrill to the sound of stately music written to enforce the solemnity of majestic words. And it must be a hardened soul indeed that is not softened by the repetition of words that have been sanctified to it by the impressions of youth and by the tender associations of mature life.

All this would be admitted by every serious and reasonable individualist. The point of his conflict with the ritualist is not precisely here. It is rather upon the question as to the soundness of this motive as a stimulus to the religious life, and it is just at this point that the Unitarian attitude becomes clear and defensible. It is

by this time hardly necessary to say that the Unitarian begins in this matter as in others with the individual. He knows perfectly well the power over the individual of the sense of community and he would utilize this as a valuable aid in strengthening the individual's sense of his own relation to God and to life. We have seen how this balance of the individual and the community affects his understanding of the nature and function of the Church. The Church as an organization owes its whole value, in his mind, to the nature of the individuals who compose it. So it is with the question of formalism in worship. The Unitarian would have no quarrel with forms if he could be quite sure that they really represented the honest personal thought and feeling of those who practise them. It is because he is not sure of this — or, rather, because he is quite sure of the contrary — that he dreads all formalism in worship, and is ready to take his chances on the other side. What he thinks he sees in the formalisms of worship is that they invariably tend first to obscure and then to falsify the thought of those who practice them. He does not believe it is possible that any form of words can for any long period of time continue to express the advancing thought of honest and independent men, and he believes that the arrangements of the religious life, as of all other forms of associated life, should be made

for the honest and the independent, — not for the shifty and the timid.

It follows, therefore, that the Unitarian is the declared enemy of all consistent sacramentalism. He is ready to define worship as the approach to God, but he will not accept as guides along that road any formulated series of ordinances, no matter how cleverly they may seem bound together by unbroken traditions of the Church. He will not admit the right of any man to tell him how he may express the emotions of praise or desire, gratitude, repentance, adoration, humility, which make up his attitude toward the source of all things. These, he feels, are his own or they are nothing. If any organization of men tells him it has a special divine commission to direct his expression of these feelings, he meets its claim with a general denial. He will not believe that any human organization knows any better than another or any better than he himself the mind of God, which is the end of worship, and so he is not afraid to make his way alone. Worship seems to him so great a thing that he cannot admit any intrusion into it on the part of any one. He dares, because he must, bring his own sorrow, his own thankfulness, his own aspiration, weakness, repentance and set them in the light of that Infinite Presence in which alone they find their true meaning for him. He dares this because he thinks

of God as his natural resort in all his highest states of feeling. That is what God means to him. It means the source and centre of all that Life in which his life is a part, the strength of his weakness, the light of his darkness, the goal of his ambitions, the giver of all that seems to him good, the giver also — in love — of what seems to him evil.

These are the forms under which God presents himself to his mind, and how then can he do otherwise than set himself freely, without reserve and without mediation, into relation with a being so intimately bound up with every deeper feeling, every higher impulse of his nature? We have said the ritualist thinks of the individual as intruding himself into a higher order, to which he ought to be subject. The Unitarian has precisely the opposite feeling. To him the ritual is the intruding thing. The natural and normal attitude of man is to be near to God. It is only when some false authority tries to impose itself upon him, that he is forced away from that natural and simple relation. That is what seems to the Unitarian an intrusion: when priesthoods and orders, rituals and liturgies, come in between man and his God. The impertinence, the crime, seems to him to be on the other side. The proper, the fitting, thing is that the man be free; the false, the confusing, thing is that he be bound by any

fixed system in the making of which he has had no share.

In this last word we find the clue to the Unitarian's thought on the whole question of common worship. It will be objected here, as in the case of the Unitarian idea of the Church, that the logical outcome would be to drive every man apart by himself into the solitude of his own soul when he desired most to draw near to God. The Unitarian accepts the criticism and points here again to the teaching of the Master. If there was anything about which the teaching of Jesus was clearer than another, it was this. If there was any evil he thought it worth while to combat more steadily than any other, it was the abuse of a soul-destroying ritualism that had intruded itself between the people and their God until it seemed as if all the springs of a natural piety had been parched and dried up within them forever. The command of Jesus was to throw it all off — not to compromise or explain away, but to throw the whole thing off at once and go back straight to the simple worship in spirit of a God who was spirit. The supreme harmony of man with God was, so he taught, to be attained only when the individual soul should withdraw itself from all outward influence — should enter into its closet and pray in secret to its Father, who sees in secret.

Shall we then try to be absolutely logical and literal in our understanding of this teaching? Shall we say, as some men have tried from the beginning to say: Let us have *no* forms, no organization, no recognition of the common instincts of humanity, no appreciation of the subtle influence of the community upon the individual? To all this the Unitarian answers, "No." Here as elsewhere it is a question, not indeed of compromises, but of proportion, of emphasis, of adjustment between opposing forces. He believes the teaching of Jesus to represent the highest ideal of Christian worship. The full and free communion of the individual soul with the soul of the universe seems to him the highest conception of the religious attitude. At all costs this idea must be retained. Without it Christianity would cease to have a function in the world. Whatever really opposes or impedes it must be rejected without hesitation and without compromise. Whatever really aids it must be cultivated and developed, so long as it seems likely to continue helpful toward this supreme end.

Among these aids to the life of the spirit, the Unitarian reckons the institution of common and public worship. He feels a certain instinctive sympathy with those men who, from time to time, have sought to realize in some literal fashion the individualism of Jesus; but he cannot help seeing how even they have been

compelled to recognize the demands of man's social nature. Even they sought companionship in solitude.

Such is the history of monasticism almost from its very beginning. Men were driven by a variety of motives, into which it is well not to inquire too closely, to forsake the company of their fellows and seek in desert solitudes the inner grace the world had failed to give them. It was a flattering illusion, — as if they were sure of their own loftiness of nature and purpose. It may well have answered for a brief period of special exaltation. But soon the social instinct, as deep-seated in the human heart as any motive of personal advantage, put forth its insistent claim and found its answer. Gradually, without settled plan, these scattered "saints" of the desert drew together into unformed groups living still in defiant self-assertion, yet coming also into ever closer touch with each other and realizing ever more clearly an ideal of a regulated community. Then came leaders, — teachers of a constitutional system for the separated life. Then orders, — vast congregations of men living apart from the usual custom of society, yet developing more and more a use and custom of their own that rivalled or surpassed in completeness the codes of cities or of states. But even this was not enough. The principle of separation had proved its own destruction. The monk had failed; the friar, the brother of all who

needed him, came to take his place. The friar began in poverty, in humility, and ignorance; but soon the wealth of the spiritually awakened layman poured into his satchel, the pride of power laid hold upon him, and the learning of Europe was in his hands. The Jesuit was the culmination of this extraordinary history. Separated from the world like all his predecessors, he was yet in the very thick of the world's fiercest conflicts, making use of his separateness as a weapon to shape the forms of social organization to his own iron scheme. Separation as a working force has been effective only in so far as its professors have violated their own principle and put themselves in relation with the working agencies of the society about them. Just as the Mystics of the Middle Ages, beginning with a rejection of all scholastic processes, ended by founding a "school" of their own, so the individualists in worship have found themselves driven into some form of association lest they remain in a sterile seclusion fatal alike to themselves and to the idea they represent. The Unitarian shows his true catholicity in recognizing from the start the dependence of the individual, even in so purely personal a matter as worship, upon the life of the community. Only — and here is the gist of the whole position — he thinks of the common life as an aid to the inner spiritual life of the individual and only as

such. He will not accept it as a substitute for the inner vision. Neither will he admit it as an authority dictating the terms upon which the inner vision may enjoy its right to be. Again he reminds himself that where there is no vision the people perish; that is, that the life of the community depends upon maintaining the clearness of the vision which is and always must be a thing of the individual. The Unitarian would admit, therefore, naturally, the largest liberty as to forms. While his sympathy goes first to the simpler expressions of the religious spirit, he will not limit any of his fellows in their choice of a more formal service. The only thing he insists upon is that the form shall not impose itself upon any man as something having value in itself.

The Unitarian is emphatically Protestant in changing the emphasis of noble service from the sacramental to the personal and spiritual side. Where he retains the word "sacrament" at all, he has completely changed its meaning — so completely that probably few Unitarians realize the full historic significance of the word. They have forgotten, if they ever knew, that in the pre-Reformation Church the word "sacrament" acquired a secondary meaning which gave to the "sacramental" act a certain virtue of its own, so that the mere performance of the act by the right person and in the right way

had a certain effect upon the person who received it. The whole process of the Reformation might be described as a continuous protest against this view of a sacrament, and yet the dominant parties in the Reformation were never tired of insisting, as against its more thoroughgoing elements, that they had not given it up and did not propose to do so. Now the Unitarian belongs historically to these more thoroughgoing elements of the Reformation. The former idea of a sacrament as an observance which, even in ever so slight a degree, had a positive and effectual virtue in itself (*ex opere operato*) seems to him so dangerous to the spiritual life of the individual that he can be satisfied with nothing less than its complete abandonment. If he permits himself to use the word at all, it is only in connection with one of the several "sacraments" of the historic church, the sacrament of the Eucharist, and even here, if he stops to think, he will rather use some other word. He will prefer the purely historic phrase, the "Lord's Supper," or that other truly spiritual word, "communion," which conveys to him precisely the meaning which has most significance for him. In any case he will be quite clear that the essence of the formal act of participation consists wholly in its memorial character. "In remembrance of me" is the clew to the Unitarian's understanding of this, the great central feature of his-

toric Christian worship. As such, as a reminder of the life and death of Jesus and of their value to themselves personally as members of a modern Christian society, Unitarians have generally retained this simple memorial service. They have no quarrel, however, with those within their fellowship who do not feel the need of such formal reminder. They feel about this, as they do about all forms, that the man who cares least for such formal expression may be most keenly alive to the spirit it is intended to cultivate. He may be precisely the person who least needs the outward and occasional reminder, because his whole life is attuned to the spirit of the common Master. What they dread above all things else is, that this or any other rite should ever become a substitute for genuine feeling, and they feel very keenly how great that danger is.

On this point Unitarians have gone ahead of most other Protestants. They have kept even with them, however, in placing the emphasis of religious service upon the two elements of preaching and public *extempore* prayer. In both these exercises they express that sense of the value of the individual which is the key-note of their whole appeal to the religious sentiment. In the preaching they value the direct summons of one individual to others. In public prayer they express the leadership of an individual guiding others in

their direct approach to God. Unitarianism has had to share with other forms of Protestantism the reproach that its sermons are not sermons at all, but "lectures," no doubt excellent in their way, but inappropriate as a part of a religious service and ineffective as a stimulus to the religious life. This reproach assumes as its starting-point that there is some generally recognized standard of what a sermon ought to be and that any discourse departing from this standard must be set in some other category of literary form. Unitarians would probably allow as wide a liberty in this matter as any other Christian body. They are willing to listen with patience to a great variety of forms of appeal from their pulpits. They do not require that a text of Scripture shall be put forward as the real or nominal bond of connection between the ideas the preacher wishes to impart. They would not limit him in the choice of subjects for his discourse. His sermons may be doctrinal, political, moral, historical, scientific, even poetical, as the Spirit gives him utterance. In all this Unitarians do not differ greatly from other open-minded Christians of all denominations at the present day. Even in those connections most inclined to hedge their preachers about with limitations of form, when a man arises who is really a man, and who speaks to his fellowmen with authority and not like the men of books, the

people hear him gladly. What gives to the preaching element in Unitarian worship a certain peculiar importance is the demand upon the preacher that he bring to his preaching always something of the same spirit which he is trying to interpret to others. Or, to put it in another way, that he shall not be the mere echo or reflection of an institution, a book, a creed, or any tradition whatsoever. The writer once heard an important clergyman in an established and ritualistic church say that he gave very little thought indeed to his sermons. He read through "the lesson of the day" the evening before and jotted down the few random thoughts which this suggested, and that was his sermon. This was said, not at all by way of apology for the very poor sermon that resulted, but distinctly as a declaration of principle. It was meant to convey the idea that the personality of the preacher should be kept as far as possible in the background and not allowed to "intrude" itself upon the legitimate sphere of influence of the sacred traditions he was set there to maintain.

The Unitarian attitude is as far as possible from this. It sees the danger the formalist would avoid, but it does not fear it; or, rather, as between the two dangers of individualism and formalism, it deliberately chooses the former. The Unitarian perceives, as every thinking man must do, the evil of a blatant and defiant egotism

expressing itself in vulgar and theatrical appeals to superficial and transient sentiments. He knows the fatal lengths to which a straining after "originality" may mislead an undisciplined talent. He sees these things, but he is willing to take the risk of giving every liberty to every form of sincere effort. He thinks the community is safer when it is called upon to measure the men who appeal to it for a hearing than when it is furnished with men picked out beforehand by any expert tribunal whatsoever. He believes that in the long run — and generally not so very long a run either — the claimant for influence among men gets judged about as he deserves, and he wishes him to have his chance.

If worship means "the approach to God," then the function of the sermon is to present to the mind of the listener such ideas as shall aid him in that approach, not at the moment only, but so long as he shall be able to keep these ideas consciously or unconsciously in mind. That is what we meant by saying that the preacher to Unitarians must bring something of the spirit he is trying to interpret. He cannot be a mere agent. He must be himself, and he must draw others because he is drawn by spiritual forces within himself. He must have that subtle quality we cannot otherwise describe than as "personality." He may not thrust it into the foreground without danger of spoiling its effect; but it

must be there, and it must be felt. It is this subtle quality that must inform his treatment of every subject with a vitality that is swift to communicate itself to every responsive listener. It is because he has this quality that every subject of human interest is open to him. He will not lecture upon it as an expert. He will not deal with capital and labor as an economist, but as a man who can see in economic problems one impressive phase of the struggle to realize the kingdom of God on earth. He will not speak of nature and art as an artist, but as one who sees in both some reflection of divine order and beauty. He will not deal with the rivalries of nations as a politician, but as an interpreter of a divine ideal for the government of the peoples in righteousness and peace.

These are lofty demands upon the Christian preacher. It is certain that in the majority of cases they will be but imperfectly fulfilled; but the Unitarian can hardly feel that this is a reason for abandoning them, and being satisfied with lower and more formal standards. On the contrary, he thinks that difficulty of attainment will only stimulate to higher and more personal effort. He cannot believe that the time has come, or ever will come, when the influence of one human personality upon others, exercised through the living voice, will cease to be potent for good. The preaching thus

remains with Unitarians what it was in the first generation of Protestantism, the central incident of public worship. The early description of Protestants as "those who go to the Preaching" in distinction from "those who go to the Mass" holds good for them in all its original significance. It expresses precisely their striving after the individual and spiritual as opposed to the "sacramental" and traditional.

The same distinction enters also into the Unitarian's idea of prayer both public and private. Prayer is to him the most personal, the most sacred, the most intimate demand of worship. It is the approach to God in the most eminent sense. If prayer is not personal it is not, to the Unitarian, prayer at all. The "vain repetitions" against which Jesus protested with such consistent emphasis seem to him still a mockery of all that is most essentially Christian in the thought of the Master. True, as we have already noted, there is a legitimate sphere within which the common spiritual experiences of mankind may be formulated in words that will fairly express many of the states of feeling that may properly be described as religious. Such formulations undoubtedly serve in turn to call forth such states of feeling, and the Unitarian would be quite willing to admit that it is better to have one's religious emotion stirred on stated occasions than never to have

it stirred at all. He even goes so far sometimes as himself to make a limited use of formulas that seem to him most aptly to express the feeling he has at the moment in his mind. He gladly accepts the fellowship of men who, agreeing fundamentally with him in the real nature of religious experience, still cling to forms he no longer finds useful for himself. What he dreads in himself above all else is a slackening of the hold upon him of that personal tie which binds him to the source of all such experience. He fears lest in the strain of life he may drift unconsciously into that comfortable half-world of reality and unreality in which he might come to accept the phrase for the thought, the formula for the feeling it once expressed to some one not himself.

For to the Unitarian the very essence of prayer is sincerity. The Roman Catholic theory of confession rested upon a perfectly sound idea. It is true that every human soul needs frequently to be confronted with some power outside itself and greater than itself, before which it may strip off all concealments and self-deceptions and stand in naked reality waiting for help to take up the burden and the strife again with greater courage and a clearer hope. In rejecting the agency of a human mediator, Protestants have not abandoned this idea. The Protestant theory of prayer is precisely this: that the individual human soul makes its con-

fession direct to its God. The various branches of Protestant Christianity have been true to this theory in varying degrees. To some it has seemed best to restrict the individual as far as possible by supplying formulas intended to cover every legitimate need of the religious life and prohibiting or discouraging personal expressions of devotion as likely to confuse the minds of the simple. Others have gone to the extreme of Quietism, avoiding all formal expression and seeking for clearness in such a complete absorption in the divine as would make all occasional utterances unnecessary. Unitarians would find their place somewhere between these two extremes. They believe in prayer, — first as an attitude of mind and then as the expression of that attitude in words, — not, indeed, as a means of making it the more intelligible to God, but of making it clearer to themselves. In trying to define prayer they cannot get far away from the definition at the head of this chapter: "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire." It is the desire that makes the prayer, and in this consists at once the comfort and the awfulness of it. The comfort, because we may be sure that no defect of utterance on our part can work against us if only our heart be pure — the awfulness because we may be equally sure that no wordy devices of ours, however much they may quiet our consciences for the moment, can obscure the base desire that is

really at the bottom of our hearts. That is the Unitarian starting-point on this subject. What we really desire we are actually praying for, not at given moments, but all the time. It is this desire that dictates the decisions by which our character is determined. We are what we are because of the desires that have actuated us up till now, and what we shall be in the future depends upon how we can balance and regulate and purify the desires of the years to come. Starting with this idea the Unitarian lays his emphasis naturally, not so much on stimulating men to pray; for so long as they really desire they are praying, whether they will or no. Rather he puts his emphasis on the nature of the things desired and the duty of so formulating one's desires to one's self as to be quite clear what they are and whither they are likely to lead. The Unitarian therefore believes in formal prayer, both public and private, because it helps him to know at any given moment whether his inmost wishes are in harmony with that fundamental law which he aims to make the standard and the guide of his spiritual life.

It is clear from all this what the opinion of Unitarians must be on the once much-discussed question whether the prayers of men can alter the "plan of God." They do not profess to know the plan of God, nor would they set up their human judgments as standards by

which the governance of the universe ought to be regulated. They join with all rationally thinking men in rejecting as mischievous superstition the notion that the wishes of men expressed, no matter in what approved form, can change ever so slightly the operation of those natural laws by which the life of mankind is shaped and limited. They would not pray for rain in drought, but they would pray for wisdom and strength to know and do the things that might help to make drought less frequent and less harmful. They would not pray that bodily infirmity might be taken away from them by some sudden change of material condition, but they would pray, first for such knowledge of natural law as might help them to avoid disease, and then for patience to bear the burden that the ignorance and folly of the race have laid upon them.

It will be asked then, perhaps, if the thought of Unitarians about prayer is wholly subjective; if they are concerned merely with the reaction upon themselves. The answer to this question would have to be both "yes" and "no." Let us take the extreme illustration which naturally suggests itself in all these discussions. Unitarians would, of course, deny that any wishes of men at a given time could affect the weather — but this does not mean that men are therefore to sink back into a dull, fatalistic resignation to the "will

of God" — see their crops fail, their cattle perish, their children starve. It means only that their desires are to take some new form. They cannot believe it is the will of God that men should be born into the world to starve or to live the life of beasts. Let them, therefore, pray without ceasing that the true will of God may be unfolded to them as they shall be worthy to receive it. Such prayer, such intense and persistent desire, putting itself into words and reacting in unforeseen ways upon the activities of mankind does change even the weather. Forests planted on barren hillsides treasure up the water that is to descend in the streams and rise again to nourish the trees and water more and more fields and so bring health and vigor to more and more generations of men. But, it will be said, could not this be done without prayer? The answer is that if we mean by prayer the striving of the human heart to find the will of God and adjust itself to it in ever widening activities, then such results never have been achieved without prayer, and so we may be safe in saying they never will be.

> . . . More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of. . . .
> For so the whole round earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

The Unitarian thought on this point is in entire har-

mony with its fundamental principle. The individual must first put himself in tune with the harmony of creation and then the aggregate, the mass of human society, will fulfil its mission without discord. Prayer, the sincere desire of the individual soul, becomes the potent force whereby the kingdom of God may be established among the nations of the earth.

We have left to the last the æsthetic aspects of Christion worship, because they stand last in the order of Unitarian thought. Historically Unitarianism cannot, if it would, deny its Puritan origin. It is rooted in the traditions of men to whom forms meant little and spirit meant everything. Or, rather, to put it more correctly, forms carried to our Puritan forebears very real conceptions of evil. They dreaded beauty as suggestive of many positive laxities they were doing their best to avoid. Unitarians cherish these traditions with affectionate gratitude. They know the history of the struggle they represent, and would not willingly lose the spirit of simplicity and sincerity embodied in them. They cannot, however, overlook the change of feeling in society at large upon these subjects. For good as well as for evil, the modern world is giving a large and apparently an increasing place to the æsthetic side of life. Shall Unitarians set themselves against the current, reject the charms of architecture, of painting, of colored

windows, of music, of theatrical display by which religion — Christian and non-Christian — has sought to strengthen its hold upon society? Or shall they say: These things are, to be sure, the beggarly elements of religion, but if they serve to attract and hold the allegiance of any who would be repelled by the seeming coldness of a merely spiritual faith, then let us have them by all means? To these questions Unitarians as a body have as yet made no decided answer, and it is quite characteristic of their methods that the two processes above suggested are going on side by side among them and without injury to the essential unity that lies behind them. On the whole it may safely be said that the tradition of simplicity has been fairly maintained. Unitarians in general have an instinctive dread of forms. They do not wish, as one of them has expressed it, to see their ministers "with gowns on their minds," and as long as that healthy condition of things continues, we need not greatly fear that the "rival attractions" either of ecclesiasticism or "evangelicalism" will divert attention from any spiritual realities that are worth defending. Unitarians are likely to go on as they are now doing, emphasizing the essential unity of men with God, and therefore not greatly concerned with the mechanisms appropriate to overcome an opposition which they do not feel. If their freedom from forms

repels the sympathy of a certain type of mind, they will prefer to wait for that sympathy or to do without it, rather than seek to attract it by concessions which do not really represent their honest thought.

CHAPTER IX

THE FUTURE LIFE

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

— *J. G. Whittier.*

THE idea of a life after death is by no means peculiar to Christianity. In one or another form it appears in all religions with which we are acquainted. It seems to have its source in some universal human instinct pointing men, as soon as they begin to think about the mysteries of life, to some idea of compensation for its manifest limitations. The forms which this idea assumes are many and varied. Sometimes the life after death appears as the direct continuation of earthly life, with all its occupations, its struggles, and satisfactions. All these are likely to be magnified in the glowing haze of distance and in the purified air of an imaginary world. Again, the future life may be as far as possible removed from all earthly analogies, a sublimated existence, where all the limitations of human experience disappear in the boundless privilege of "heaven." In

such a view of the future it is this complete emancipation from human motive that makes its essential quality. Heaven is desirable precisely because it is not in any sense like earth. Even where the images of heavenly enjoyment are expressed in terms of the most acute of earthly pleasures, these are conceived of as infinitely different from anything earth can really offer.

Sometimes again the life beyond the grave is thought of as absolutely conditioned by the life on earth. Human virtue and human vice are rewarded in some absolute fashion. There is one world of the good spirits and another of the bad, and these are so separated that there can be no passage from one to the other. In one life all is bliss, in the other all torment. It is of the very essence of such a world, that it has no place for the personal struggle and personal progress of the earthly stage. Yet the condition of the soul in it is absolutely determined by the record of its human experience and is, either way, the reward of effort or of neglect in the human struggle. Sometimes this notion of reward changes to that of compensation in the narrower sense. Heaven is conceived as a place or state in which the inequalities of human life are all smoothed away. If a man has been poor, he has a right to be rich; if he has been thwarted in his desires, he has, as it were, a claim to have those desires fulfilled. Even the wicked,

victims on earth of tendencies they could not altogether control, shall be given the higher joy of finding themselves living in harmony with the divine will. It is evident that in such a world as this all ideas of cause and effect must disappear or be changed beyond human recognition. If it be said that a man is here happy because on earth he was unhappy, this cannot mean that his earthly unhappiness was in any way the effective cause of his supreme happiness. It can only mean that an all-wise administrator of the universe, governed by the principle of absolute justice, so distributes happiness and unhappiness that every human soul in the long run gets his due share of each. Happiness thus appears, not as the consequence of effort, but only as the free gift of a power that can arrange the fortunes of men at its discretion.

These are the chief dominant notions that have determined the forms in which men have clothed their thought as to the future life. We may roughly classify them by the words, "continuation," "opposition," and "compensation." Into the forms themselves, manifold and curiously interesting as they are, we are not here called upon to enter. Sometimes the thought of the future seems almost to have determined the chief activities of the living, as, for example, in Egypt, where the idea of continuation found, perhaps, its most

imposing expression. Sometimes the dead actually became more important than the living, as in China and wherever the worship of ancestors seemed to turn the gaze of men perpetually backward instead of forward. Sometimes the thought of future reward has led men to regulate their lives on earth with scrupulous exactness; sometimes it has turned them to a blind fatalism that has made them indifferent to the ordinary motives of human progress.

However carefully we examine the varied forms of human thought about the future, we shall never find any system quite consistent with itself or quite answering to our classification. The several elements we have tried to distinguish appear mingled in varying proportion, yet so that some one of them dominates the rest and gives character to the system as a whole. This is eminently true of Christianity. The several peoples among whom it made progress had each its own thought of the future, and in these we can discern without great difficulty the elements of which the Christian thought of immortality was made up. If we consult the teaching of Jesus, we find here, as on other points, an idea held with great tenacity, but not defined in any precise fashion. Jesus taught with continual emphasis the idea of a heaven, which he described as the dwelling-place of God; but since the God he taught was spirit,

it followed that the heaven in which such a God could dwell was a spiritual heaven. In other words it was not a place, but a condition. He described death as a return to God; *i.e.* as an entrance into a spiritual state freed from all material forms and fitly described as communion with God. Here, as elsewhere, Jesus could not altogether escape from the imagery of his people and his age. He used language which may easily be interpreted into the grossest materialism; but such language must be read in the light of his profoundly spiritual conception of all life. So read it becomes full of lofty spiritual suggestion.

The sense of continuity, upon which all thought of a future life ultimately rests, appears then to be something universally human. How it came, precisely in what it consists, — these are matters for the speculative philosopher. We are concerned only with the fact itself and with the Christian interpretation of it. As Christianity began to assume a dogmatic form, the doctrine of a future life became one of its central points of attraction for the inquiring outsider and of loyalty for its members. Of the three elements we have noted as discoverable in men's thought on the subject, all entered in greater or less degree into Christian speculation. The idea of continuation appears in those extravagant millenial schemes in which the faithful are represented

as entering into ecstatic enjoyment of a life that was only a magnified reproduction of all the joyful experiences of earth. Opposition was shown in descriptions of heaven as freed from the baser necessities of earthly life. Freedom from work, from conflict, from competition; pure existence without conditions or limitations, — these make the happy contrast with the life we know here. And then, running along with and through these other ideas is the note of compensation. Christianity was making its appeal above all to the oppressed and the neglected, the people to whom this world seemed to have been unfair. It was natural that they should be summoned to the following of the prophet of earthly failure by the promise of redress in a life to come.

On the whole it was this last element that gained upon the others and remained as the chief claim of Christianity in rivalry with other religious systems. The wild dreams of a millenium made up of ecstatic material joys were driven into the background by the calmer reflection of trained minds. They remained as dramatic decoration in moments of revival or in the poetic raptures of saintly dreamers; but as articles of faith they shared the fate of other extravagances that had served their turn in stimulating loyalty and inspiring courage under assault. The idea of opposition, — that everything in the future life must be the opposite

of everything here, — this lingered still and joined with the idea of compensation to make up the Christian thought of a desirable future. The lack of this world was to be made good under conditions the opposite of those that prevail here.

It will be seen that these two ideas run easily into each other; for compensation could not be possible unless the conditions of living were radically changed. In a world of competition, for example, perfect fairness was unthinkable. The weaker, in any sense, must go to the wall. But in that world of compensations precisely the weak were to find redress for their long-suffering. It was to be a world, not of human justice or even of human fairness, but of infinite mercy, where all the inequalities of earth should be smoothed away by a power capable of holding the balance over the fortunes of its children. But how about those sons of earth who seemed to need no such compensation, the rich, the strong, the successful? Why should they value a heaven which could seem to offer them only a diminished return of happiness? Christianity met this persistent inquiry by its doctrine of the essential unimportance of earthly distinction. It preached to these fortunate ones the lesson of humility and the real equality of all righteous men in the sight of God. It used its doctrine of compensation as a weapon to compel such

to righteous living. At first it was even tempted into counsels of social equality on earth, but it sloughed these off with the skin of its first great transformations and kept only so much of them as it needed to enforce its lesson of a spiritual equality. In the final compensation of heaven the miseries of the throne were to deserve the same consideration as the miseries of the hovel, no more and no less. After all, the great lesson was that the seeming inequalities of life were not the real inequalities. Here and hereafter it was the inner life that counted, and this alone would be considered in the Great Assize.

So far we have spoken of a future life for the individual as a thing to be desired; but it is hardly necessary to say that if there is to be a future life at all, it is not a question of its desirability or its undesirability. The question is only what it is like and how we are to conduct ourselves here in view of its inevitable approach. It is true there have been attempts to draw a hard and fast line between an immortality for the good and annihilation for the bad. Such an alternative belonged in the same region of thought that produced the apocalyptic visions of a sensuous millenium. "Annihilation," a word that meant nothing, was a natural corollary to the equally unmeaning phrases of a vacant and aimless rapture. Serious Christian thought got

rid of both, and in their place put the two notions of a Christian heaven and a Christian hell. It allowed the widest license in clothing these notions in beatific visions on the one hand, and the most lurid imagery on the other; but the essential fact is that Christianity accepted the idea of a future life for all men. The ghastliest pictures of infernal torment carefully preserved the idea that these wretched victims were still alive and could not escape the doom of life. The invention and elaboration of a purgatory, a probationary stage indefinitely prolonged, was only another illustration of this same clinging to the idea of life as still subject to the divine laws of justice and mercy. Whatever we may think of the Christian doctrine of a future life, this is clear, — that it does not present immortality as a reward, but as a fact. It is not a question whether we shall live forever. It is only a question which life we are to live. If there is immortality at all, it is for all men. It is not a promise made on certain conditions; it is as little within our control as our birth or our death.

That is about as far as it is safe to go in defining the historical meaning of the doctrine of immortality within the Christian limits. The Church, in its authoritative capacity, has not attempted to define it much more rigorously. It has used it as an attraction and as a weapon, but it has been content to accept it without

trying to give too exact a picture of the life that is to be. Outside the limits of the Church such attempts have not been wanting. From the beginning until now the desire to give definite form to this universal instinct has proved nothing short of fascinating to speculative minds. Even our own scientific days have not escaped the inevitable attraction of this problem. All the thought of personality in this life has led to its extension into the life after death. Theologians, philosophers, scientists, men of the most diverse training and moved by all varieties of interest, have tried their hands at an explanation, if nothing more, of a belief that has had so profound a hold upon the imaginations of their fellows. An explanation, yes, but not a solution. If one reads over, for instance, the discourses on immortality that have been delivered within the past few years at one of our most important centres of education, one cannot help feeling that all this activity of our best minds has not advanced the real question a single step nearer to an ultimate answer. Many ingenious devices have been put forward for giving to the whole question a meaning different from that which it has always had in the general understanding of men. The terms of the problem have been stated and re-stated in a variety of suggestive ways; but the thing that really interests mankind, if they are interested at all, the ancient de-

mand: If a man die, shall he — he and no other — really live again? and if so how, when, and where? — this demand, frankly and squarely put, has not been frankly and squarely met. The field is open for speculation as widely as ever.

This is the stage at which the Unitarian thought approaches this subject. It frankly accepts it as an unsolved problem, still open to the widest variety of understanding. It has no solution of its own to offer. Properly speaking, there is no such thing as a Unitarian doctrine of immortality. It is not one of the subjects on which the mind of Unitarians is inclined to dwell. This disinclination comes partly from reaction against the undue prominence that was given to it by the special type of theology from which Unitarianism revolted. The fear of eternal punishment seemed to the first rebels against the traditional theology a motive in life only less unworthy than the hope of a salvation which should take the form of unending bliss in a world relieved of all the elements which give value to the triumphs of earthly effort. What repelled them, and what has always repelled Unitarians, is this implied severance of any possible future existence from the life that now is. While they were not inclined to formulate a doctrine of their own, there were certain things they felt strongly, and it is these things, partly negative and partly posi-

tive in their expression, that still constitute the Unitarian thought of immortality.

First of all, Unitarians are sure that if there is an individual future life, it must be for all men, good, bad, and indifferent. If the good are to be *permitted* to live, the bad must be *condemned* to live. But, since it is an article of Unitarian faith that no man is or can become altogether good or altogether bad, they are unable to imagine any dividing line by which two future worlds could be formed that would equitably separate mankind into their appropriate dwelling-places. The notion of a midway third region, where the surplus of evil left after the trials of earth shall somehow be removed and the soul set free to enjoy the bliss of heaven, they dismiss as a childish dream, interesting only for the glimpse it gives of an unconquerable faith in the perfectibility of human nature that is the redeeming touch of even the cruelest theology. In short, the Unitarian cannot conceive of anything worthy to be called life without the element of diversity among individuals which is the very mark of a human society. But then, again, diversity seems to imply necessarily conflict, struggle, and therewith all that we include under the word "progress." It is inconceivable that there should be a world of human souls, all content to stand still, satisfied with "the station to which it has pleased God to call them." That

corresponds to no idea of life with which Unitarians are familiar. Rather, it suggests the very idea of death, a death of the soul worse than any physical decline.

Again, it seems clear that any conceivable form of future existence must in some sense be a social existence. The individual soul retaining its individuality must do so at the price of conformity to some social ideal. It cannot be thought of as enjoying or suffering merely as an individual. It must have relations to other souls, and if we try to imagine what these relations are, we fall inevitably into the categories of earthly affections and earthly duties. Shall we try to imagine a heaven without love from man to man? And if love is to exist, what is to call it forth? It must be some form of appeal, such as service or sympathy. Unless, indeed, we are to imagine such a boundless promiscuity of charity that all personality shall be lost and all distinctions among individuals disappear. It is plain that the moment we try in this way to work out any conception of the future based upon human ideals we are involved in the old familiar roundabout that brings us back to the picture of a life that is only the enlarged reproduction of the life we are now living. But is it possible for the human mind really to live by any other than human ideals? We have no others. If it be said that death brings us at once into a world in which absolutely different ideals govern, then we may as

well cease to think about it while we are here, because we have no terms in which to clothe our thought.

It is this despair of finding adequate forms of expression for any ideal state of existence that has led thoughtful men into explanations of the Christian doctrine of immortality which run perilously near the margin of impersonality. We have heard much in these days of a kind of universal immortality. We are reminded of the analogies of all organic life. The tree does not die. It passes into other forms of life, which in their turn give place to new and ever new combinations of elements. We are shown the eternal cycle of the sea, the cloud, the fertilizing rain, the earth, and again the sea, and we are told: Thus it is with the life of man. It, too, can never die, but is taken up into the universal life. Its material parts go back into the eternal round of Nature, from which they sprang. But what of its spiritual part, the only part that here really interests us? This, too, we are told lives on forever. Every human thought or word or action has its permanent effect upon the aggregate of human experience. No particle of this spiritual activity of man is wasted, any more than is any particle of the activity of Nature. Character, — the accumulation of spiritual qualities that constitutes the real man, — this never dies, but goes on influencing the world of human being and through this affecting even the world of matter

to the remotest verge of time. And this is immortality. The individual soul lives in the truest sense in its unending influence upon the universal life.

This line of discussion is at first thought especially attractive to the Unitarian. It appeals readily to his sense of the unity and interdependence of all that we call life. He is ready to accept all there is in it of observed fact and of deduction from this fact to the processes of the spiritual life. That the individual soul lives on in influence, dynamically, if one please, in the great scheme of things, — this suits perfectly with his ideas of the nature both of the human soul and of the universe in which it forms a part. But is this, in any rational meaning of the words, a doctrine of individual immortality? Honesty compels him to admit that it is not. It is pleasant for me to think that my worthy actions will go on doing good forever. It is a valuable discipline to remember that my evil actions must bear fruit forever in a more or less disordered universe. But if I, the same I that does these good and evil things, am not to be conscious of my continuing personality, it is cold comfort to think that it is going on in spite of me. The same thing is equally true of the tree and the drop of water in the ocean. It is all true, but it is not enough to constitute in any serious way a solution of that problem of individual immortality that has puzzled the ages. What men are seeking to-day,

as they have always sought, is some basis for their invincible instinct that, having once lived, they are going to keep on living. That instinct the Unitarian shares. He is no more concerned to know where it came from than he is to know the origin of life in general. He is glad to own in this, as in so many other matters, his fellowship with the honest striving of all the ages to come to some clearness of thought. As he looks over the attempts of his fellow Christians to give definite shape to the common instinct he recognizes many close analogies to his own thinking.

The difference between Unitarian thought on this subject and that of most other Christians is in the degree of definiteness that can possibly be reached. While others have formulated their thought and their feeling into quite precise images of happiness or misery or a combination of these in a life too fatally like the present, Unitarians have been content to let this subject remain in the region of instinctive feeling, in which precision is dangerous. It has resulted from this attitude that the doctrine of immortality is one of those in which Unitarians do not take a very acute interest. Their respect for human nature, their sense of the harmony of the universe, their conviction as to the imperativeness of the moral law, their profound faith in the goodness of the earthly life as a part of the goodness of all life rightly understood, —

all these combine to fix their attention rather on this life than on the life after death. Their thought of death as a necessary condition of life precludes them from attaching supreme importance to the change it may bring. They are willing to rest in the confidence of the poet as expressed in the lines at the head of this chapter.

There is another modern "proof" of immortality that must be mentioned because it has a peculiar charm for a certain type of mind. It is the so-called demonstration by the method of science. There are those who imagine that the darkness of the world beyond the grave can be penetrated by the same methods of observation and deduction by which we seek to understand the material life of the earth. They remind us that not merely this material side of earthly life, but at least the border-land of our psychic experiences, has been made the subject of scientific investigation, and they believe that we have reached at least a few solid bits of result as to the interdependence of the two. Now, they say, why should not this border land be widened? Why may not the same processes of psychical and even of material investigation be extended into the world beyond? They are convinced that certain of the phenomena of spiritual manifestation from the world after death into the world of earthly experience are established beyond the reach of criticism.

However few these established facts of spiritual communication of the dead with the living may be; however slight their revelations of the conditions prevailing in that other world, it is enough for these observers that something is established. They point to the analogies of other sciences; how these have crept on from point to point, and they say: Here at last we are on firm ground. If only one disembodied spirit has communicated with men on earth, there we have the absolute demonstration that that spirit is still going on, the same individual personality it was during its earthly life. And if this one, then all. They are convinced that it needs only the proper application of the scientific method to bring the whole population of the spirit world into active communication with the whole population of this. So far this appalling calamity has been averted, but it is easy to see how readily minds otherwise sound may be drawn into this trap of pseudo-science. It is less their fault than it is the fault of better trained men, who have played with phenomena they ought to have known to be beyond the reach of mortal powers, as if they were actually within the scope of human methods. It was inevitable that individual Unitarians, with their respect for true science, should have fallen under the spell of this fatal delusion; but it may be said with entire confidence that Unitarians as a whole have not allowed its superficial attraction to take any hold

on them whatever. They have discerned instinctively that the nature of the evidence on which all such conclusions must rest is hopelessly far removed from the convincing quality of true scientific evidence. They have distrusted the plausible glibness with which the leaders in psychic investigations have often masked their actual credulity and readiness to see things that were not there. Even in cases that seemed to challenge all their powers of resistance, they have on the whole been able to keep their heads and to distinguish between actual proof and the inability to disprove. Because certain phenomena could not be accounted for on any clearly defined grounds they have not accepted this as proof that they were caused by the action of the spirits of the departed. They have been content to wait and meanwhile to trust their future in the same hands that have guided their past and are leading them in their present struggle toward the best that is in them.

The one argument for personal immortality that impresses the Unitarian is the universality of the human instinct of indestructibility. He cannot resist the feeling that what all men have always demanded and believed in with such intensity must have its roots far down in the absolute facts of universal being. Annihilation is unthinkable. Absorption in the mass of universal life is an evasion of the question. There is nothing in Uni-

tarian thought that contradicts the idea of continuing personality. All it asks is that it shall not be called upon to give to this idea any precise and definite form. It refuses to think of this life as unworthy, merely because it may be only a moment in the course of eternal being. It fails to see why this moment is not likely to be as worthy as any other. Its obvious imperfections burden us because we know them; but this is not to say that any conceivable form of future life would be without imperfections. Imperfection is of the very essence of life. Without it there would be nothing to live for, no goal toward which to strive, no happiness in the overcoming of obstacles, nothing which, so far as we can formulate it, would make life worth living. At all events Unitarians are sure that whatever the future may have in store for them must somehow depend upon the use they make of the opportunities offered them here and now. In this thought they find the real significance of faith in a life to come. In truly comprehending the harmony of law and love and work here they believe they will gain the most confident assurance for the hereafter.

CHAPTER X

THE THOUGHT OF GOD

One thought I have, my ample creed,
So deep it is and broad,
And equal to my every need, —
It is the thought of God.

— *Frederick L. Hosmer.*

We give to the subject of the Thought of God the final place in the order of our reflections because we reach it through the series of lesser problems we have thus far been following. We began with the nature of man, his origin, his complex personality, his limitations and his hope. We end with the idea of God, which gives to man the centre about which he may group all that is highest in the life of the spirit as it is to be lived here on earth. The order of our thought on this subject will be similar to that followed in our discussion of the future life. Here also we are dealing with a problem that has profoundly interested thinkers of every age and race, as soon as the age or the race passed from the stage of blind acceptance of tradition to that of reflection upon the how and the wherefore of its highest ideal possessions. Here also we must give up from the beginning any claim

to absolute, demonstrable knowledge and confess ourselves frankly to be moving in the realm of faith, — yet of a faith none the less strong because it is not subject to material or logical methods of proof.

We start once more from a great universal fact. Mankind, so far as we have any acquaintance with it, has always made for itself some formulation of a divine ideal, no matter how crude this might be. Even though, as sometimes happened, the figure of Deity was something apparently lower than the men it served, so that they could command it to do their bidding, still, after all, it could do something for them that they could not do for themselves. It represented to them powers beyond their understanding or control. Their lives were somehow bound up with its larger sanctions. And when we pass from these lower stages of divine representation to the higher reaches of spiritual conception, we see still more clearly how insistent has been this demand of the human mind and soul for some understandable figuring forth of a universal ideal. It used to be the fashion to classify all such attempts according to their relation to our own accepted traditions of the divine nature and dealing. We assumed with a certain arrogance, the natural arrogance of all ignorance, that what was different from our own must necessarily be absolutely less worthy. We took it for granted that we had heard the last word of

divine revelation of itself, and that all which preceded this must therefore be delusion, in which error and vice were about equally divided. In short, we were inclined to assume a certain absolute standard of true and right in men's thought of God and to try all shades of difference by that standard. Or, rather, to put it quite frankly, we went back of all human thought and, starting with God himself as absolute being, we imagined that he had given to us and to us alone such a complete definition of himself that neither we nor any other human being had either the need or the right to think about the matter at all. All we had to do was to accept what had come to us by the flattering method of a special revelation, entrusted once for all to a book or to a church or to a specific line of prophets or in whatever other way revelation might be guaranteed to a waiting world. To admit that the divine ideal was subject to the varying interpretations of men seemed to imply an uncertainty, a variation in Deity itself, which must be fatal to the respect of mankind. It used to be accepted as a fact of nature that God made man in his own image; to have said that on the contrary man had always made his God in his own image would have carried with it an almost blasphemous suggestion.

This attitude of mind has in these latter days been pretty radically changed. A new science, that of Com-

parative Religion, or, to give it its more modest title, the History of Religions, has made its way quite naturally and without flourish of trumpets into the accepted group of definable sciences, and is going on from day to day with ever new suggestions clearing up obscurities and opening the ways of God to men. The lesson of this new science is above all else the lesson of all true learning, namely, respect for other points of view than our own. It is teaching those who needed to learn it that whatever may be the absolute nature of the power or powers that encompass the earthly life of men, that nature is not revealed to any one part of the human race in any such final or complete fashion as to exclude the honest differences of the rest. It is teaching us first of all the unity of the religious instinct. It is showing us that the impulse which leads the primitive savage to reach out beyond himself into a world unseen indeed, but of whose existence he is almost more certain than he is of the visible world about him, is in its essence the same impulse that guides a Plato or a Jesus, a Marcus Aurelius, or a Savonarola. But this is teaching us something more than the lesson of respect, for respect may easily run over into a kind of gentle tolerance as narrow as the ancient hatreds and less fruitful. Knowledge of the forms of religion is showing us that our own religious ideas are inextricably bound up with those of other peoples and other times, so that we

cannot even understand our own thoughts about religion until we have gained some of this wider vision. We are learning to think of these other ways of reaching out to God, not as divergences from a given standard to be tolerated by our charity, but as indispensable contributions towards a completer understanding of the divine mystery.

The variations in these methods of coming into relation with the powers that control the life of men seem at first sight to be infinite in number and in character; but as we come closer to them they fall quite naturally into three principal classes. For our purposes we may think of the forms of Deity as grouped under the heads of polytheism, dualism, and unity. By polytheism we understand that conception of Deity which presents it to us in practice under many aspects, each clothed in a form and accompanied by a symbolism peculiar to itself. In other words polytheism gives us a series of personifications of Deity, each appealing to some specific sense of the divine in man and offering some peculiar response to a specific demand of human nature. By dualism we mean that idea of the divine which represents it as divided into two essentially opposed and irreconcilable elements, warring with each other for the control of the world of Nature and of Man. This opposition is conceived of as eternal, without beginning or end, the inevitable expla-

nation of the contradictions and imperfections of our mortal experience. By unity we imply a notion of Deity in which all variations are excluded and all oppositions reconciled, so that in place of the multiplicity of polytheism and the discord of dualism our minds are fixed upon the eternal sufficiency and the eternal harmony of a single divine ideal.

It would be possible to present these three aspects of the divine nature as so many successive stages of human reflection upon the problem of the divine. It might be shown with a certain approach to truth that polytheisms are the natural product of that childlike faith in the reality of occult forces behind the phenomena of nature which leads men to personify these forces and to deal with them on equal terms. Polytheism has in it a something essentially popular. No matter how carefully priesthoods and governments might seek to safeguard the integrity of the official company of the gods, they could not prevent the popular mind from working actively and fruitfully in the creation of new divine images or the cherishing of older, perhaps forbidden, ones. The history of polytheisms is full of such illustrations of the appealing nature of its principle to the simple minds and hearts of natural men. One is almost tempted to say that this is the form of religion best adapted to the daily needs of plain, unsophisticated human nature. Its wide hospi-

tality to divine suggestions, its elasticity, enabling it to add ever new figures to its pantheon as new relations of life might arise, the readiness with which it could translate the deities of other polytheisms into the terms of its own, all these are qualities that render the notion of a multiplicity of deities most attaching to the student of religious history. One quite comprehends the feeling of the gentle poet of nature as he thinks of the comparative forlornness of his own inherited creed and almost longs to

> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
> And hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

It requires a considerable wrench to pass from this naïve contentment with the humane guidance of the universe to the atmosphere of perpetual conflict suggested by the dualistic scheme of things. The very essence of this idea is reflective, almost scholastic, in its suggestion. It hardly seems possible that men could have arrived at it except by a gradual elimination of the variations involved in polytheism. The simplification of the divine idea here presented could only be the result, we feel, of a persistent dwelling upon the notion of conflict as seen in the world of human effort and implying therefore a corresponding conflict in the world of divine control. In place of the implied harmony of the polytheistic universe, we meet here a universe in which discord is the

dominant note. The popularity of such a system implies, so we instinctively feel, a sombre and almost fatalistic view of life among the people that could accept it. A dualism seems to us to exist only to be resolved into something else. It cannot, at least to our minds, carry with it the idea of permanence essential to any convincing theory of a divinely ordered universe.

And, yet, precisely because it is a simplification, dualism may be a stage towards a still greater sublimation of the divine ideal. Through it the human mind may advance to the idea of unity. Unity appears as the resolution, not only of dualism, but of polytheism as well. It represents the victory at once over diversity and opposition. It is not, on the face of it, popular in its appeal. It is not content to rest where the philosophy of dualism rested, with the fact of conflict and the mere transplanting of that into the world of Deity. It relies upon the higher impulses of the thoughtful and the loyal among the people. It needs the continual inspiration of prophetic voices to keep it before the people's mind as the ideal toward which they are bidden to strive and for which they are summoned to labor and to sacrifice. The long line of Hebrew prophecy is our most familiar witness to the loftiness of this ideal and to the difficulty of maintaining it in its freshness and vigor in the popular heart. The highest note of Moslem

piety is always struck when it goes back to the original summons of its prophet to the worship of the one and only God. The most eloquent appeal of Christian devotion is found in the unbroken line of argument and exhortation needed to draw men out of the snares alike of persistent polytheism and still more insidious dualism.

This presentation of the three conceptions of deity as so many successive stages of reflection upon the divine nature has much that is attractive, but it is not quite exhaustive or convincing. We speak lightly of the simple faith of the primitive polytheist, but we have no means of being sure that his family of gods is not itself an evolution out of a still earlier idea of unity. Perhaps, after all, unity is simpler than diversity, and, for all we know, the peoples we call primitive are as far removed from a previous stage of unified religious belief as we are from their observable stage of polytheistic faith. At all events, even in the most elaborate of polytheisms with which we are acquainted, it is not difficult to recognize a persistent notion of unity. Certainly, as soon as men under a polytheistic religion begin to think about the nature of their faith and to put their thought into words, they come inevitably to an idea of unity underlying the diversity of their many personifications. The mind of man, as soon as it seeks for causes, goes back by a law of

its own being to a First Cause and is forced to relate all other being to this.

The mind is driven to the idea of unity because it is otherwise unable to correlate the diverse forces it feels and so far has been content to worship, each within its own sphere. What shall it say? Are these forces all equal and independent? In that case they must inevitably come into conflict, one with the other, and there seems to be no rational way out of this conflict. Or are they all parts of one original and pervading force, which acts through them to fulfil its various functions? If so, then they have no real existence for themselves, but are merely so many expressions of a dominant, though concealed, Unity behind them all. Or, is there one among these multitudinous deities that is superior to all the rest and from whom they derive their rights and powers? Then again we reduce the polytheism to a unity, of which the variations are but the subject agents, doing its will and responsible to it. It is, of course, at the highest points in the history of the religious thought of a polytheistic people, the points at which reflection in the minds of philosophers has come to take the place of an unquestioning faith, that we find the literary evidence of this transition from complex to simple ways of presenting the divine idea. Yet we may well doubt whether even the most childlike acceptance of the popular mythol-

ogies was not always accompanied by this same consciousness of an underlying or supervising or pervading Unity. Men liked to deal directly with their familiar spirits of earth and air and water. They liked to group these again under the headship of a family of superior gods, like the group of princes who directed the affairs of their several bands of followers; but then again, far above all these, there was the remote and solemn Great Spirit, too far away for the immediate confidence of his human subjects, but as necessary to certify and guarantee the powers of the rest as was the earthly sovereign prince to hold together the doubtful allegiance of the local chieftains.

Ordinarily this consciousness of the divine unity would not become acute. For all the ordinary dealings of life, the kindlier lower spirits, akin to the men they served, were enough. It was only under the stress of national danger or racial enthusiasm that the voices of poet or prophet or philosopher summoned the people to rally around Jehovah or Ammon or the all-pervading Sun-god or Zeus, father of gods and men, as the only sufficient expression of the people's unity. At such times the lesser powers are momentarily obscured, only to fall into their place once more when the normal conditions of life are restored. Sometimes, as in the cases of Christianity and Islam, the appeal to unity prevails.

The people, not the gifted ones, but the plain workers and sufferers, seize upon the idea of a single divine spirit interested in them as individuals, as an escape from the ills of a divided and ineffectual divine control. But it will be noticed that the conception of God thus successfully presented does not correspond with any one of our supposed means of relief from polytheism. He is not one of a group of hitherto equal deities, getting the better of the rest by his superior power or wisdom. Neither is he the One of which these are the expressions and the servants. He is the One by the side of whom there are no others. There *is* but one God, and therefore the rest are the mere imaginations of men, without reality. This God is not the expression of the religious consciousness of a single race or nation. He is the one all-sufficient Source and Cause and Upholder of all races. Before Him all earthly distinctions disappear. He is the Father, the Friend, the Judge, the Redeemer of the people. Thus polytheism is not only readily resolvable into unity. It carries with it the germs of a unity without which it could not hold together, any more than a human society could hold together without some principle of unity strong enough to overcome all its tendencies to disruption.

But what can we say of dualism, first in its relation to polytheism? The evolution of a dualism from a

polytheism is far less readily understood, and yet in fact such evolution has taken place. Within the history of Christianity, for example, we have the phenomenon of Manicheism serving as a stepping-stone to orthodox faith. Such an evolution could hardly take place except in the course of a search after unity. One of the obvious difficulties in any clearly marked polytheism is found, as we have seen, in the inevitable conflicts that must suggest themselves between the various forms of manifestation of divine power. As soon as one begins to translate these conflicts into the ordinary language of humanity, they are pretty certain to assume the form of antagonisms to which we involuntarily give the names of "good" and "evil." We think of the divine activities, that is, in terms of advantage or disadvantage to ourselves. Starting from this point of view we may readily imagine ourselves ranging all the powers of the unseen world into two lines, the one working for us, the other against us. Being engaged thus in hostile activities, so far as we are concerned, they must, from our level, appear hostile to each other. The implied harmony of the polytheistic heaven is broken up into a continuous warfare between two opposing armies. But these armies must have leaders, just as the host of the earlier heaven had its leader, and thus we arrive at the notion of two supreme antagonistic deities dividing the empire of the universe

between them. They are engaged in a conflict, but there is no reason to expect the absolute victory of either. The condition of conflict is the very essence of the dualistic scheme of things, and its resolution would mean the end of the universe as we picture it to ourselves. It is not difficult to follow this course of thought by which a polytheism may be resolved into a dualism, but one cannot help feeling that it is not a course of thought dictated by the nature of the polytheistic problem itself. If it be said that polytheism contains inevitably and of necessity the challenge to work it out into unity, the same cannot be said of its relation to dualism.

If now we come to the question of the relation of dualism to unity, we meet a new set of difficulties. Polytheism seems to point directly toward a solution into unity, but dualism appears at first as a system complete in itself. If we can once accustom our minds to the idea of an eternal opposition of good and evil as expressed in a government of the universe by two spirits eternally hostile to each other, there seems to be nothing further to do. That one of these ruling powers should overcome the other would imply the destruction of the system which we have accepted as permanent. And yet, so insistent does the demand for unity appear to be, that in the most highly developed dualistic schemes with which we are acquainted there has come a time

in which men's thought refused to be bound within the narrow limits of an eternal deadlock and moved forward to the notion of an ultimate victory of the good over the evil powers. It is obvious that if this possibility is once admitted, no matter how far into the future this victory may be removed, the very fact that it is coming implies a superiority of the good over the evil which dulls the edge of the alleged dualistic equality. In other words, a perfect dualism is no more possible than a perfect polytheism. It is a far simpler idea. It relegates all the subordinate figures of the pantheon to a perfectly clear subjection under the lead of two great controlling spirits. It has its basis in an antagonism that every human being can at once comprehend. It presents the world of spirits under forms easily paralleled in human experience. And yet, after all, it does not satisfy, and it never has quite satisfied, the human craving after an ultimate something that shall be lifted above all antagonisms into the clearer air of absolute, controlling law.

So we come along these highways of multiplicity and antagonism to the way of unity. It has never been a broad highway, travelled by great and exulting throngs. It has rather been a steep and rugged path, where only those who have had a clear vision of calm heights beyond have been content to climb. For, in fact, no sooner have

men fancied that they had won the victory over their many gods and their dual gods than they have found the vision of the one single divine being too splendid for their mortal gaze and have begun to throw veils of compromise and mediation between it and them. That is what happened with Christianity. Preached by a Semite to Semites, it was the reassertion of that principle of the divine unity of which the Semitic race seems to be the most highly endowed representative. As a Hebrew preaching to Hebrews, Jesus made use of all the highest imagery of Hebrew tradition to enforce this ideal, which in every moment of storm and stress had rallied the best there was in his people to new demonstrations of national energy. Jesus was speaking to Hebrews already powerfully affected by the examples of polytheism and dualism forced upon them by other peoples with whom they had come into vital contact. Without compromise and without the refinements of philosophic speculation, he held before them the grand, simple, divine ideal that had inspired their fathers and would, so he confidently taught, bring them once more back into the position of influence they had lost.

Jesus fell a victim, not to human baseness, but to legalism on the one hand and philosophical acuteness on the other. His word, rejected by the guides of Hebrew

religious thought and by the trained philosophers of the Greco-Roman schools, went on. Singularly enough each side borrowed from the other enough to make it acceptable. The Gentile, already well on the way toward a unified conception of Deity, found his thought along this line now fortified by the ancient Hebrew faith in the oneness of God. The Hebrew, already profiting by the subtler processes of Greek speculation, found new interpretations of the narrow dogmatism of his fathers in its manifold suggestions. The result was a fusion, in which Hebrew unity formed the chief ingredient yet was never able quite to free itself from the clinging remnants of the ancient polytheism, nor even from the attraction of the dualistic solution. The creeds of Christendom growing out of this mixture reflect their origin in the clearest manner. The principle of unity, seeking expression, now in the extreme of Sabellianism and now in the opposite extreme of Samosatianism, was driven from both these positions by the persistent demand for a statement of the divine nature which should still satisfy the latent instinct of polytheism. It was not possible to carry the mass of Christian theologians up to the point of accepting a divine ideal that should take away all mediation and so bring man face to face with his God. Arianism tried it once more and failed. Every subtlety of the Greek intellect was invoked to show that

in thus demanding a multiplex definition of God no violation of the principle of unity was intended; and yet no sooner did any one take the theologians at their word and proclaim a real and single divine unity than he was declared the most impious of heretics. It was in vain that the ritual of the Church emphasized in every way the true humanity of Jesus; the hold of the divinity in him upon the imagination of a polytheistic world was too strong. It rooted itself in the affections of Christendom until it seemed at times almost to endanger the dignity of God himself. The same instinct appears also in the readiness with which the same polytheistic generation found room for all that half-world of demi-gods and heroes against which the early zeal of Christianity had protested so loudly. The old legend-building activity set in once more and produced that delightful multitude of humanized deities and deified mortals which, under the categories of angels and of saints, have charmed the childish fancy of every Christian age.

So also did it fare with the dualistic influences surrounding the birth and early growth of Christianity. Unity was declared, but only at the price of maintaining unchanged and unabashed the notion of an eternal conflict. Within the innermost circle of the Christian apologists we find a continuous and persistent effort to give to Christian doctrine a dualistic color. Whenever

this effort became too clearly defined, so that the cry of "Manicheism!" could be raised, then it was squarely met in controversy or by law and seemed to be vanquished. Yet its traces are to be found at every stage of formulation of the Christian confessions. It went all lengths except the farthest and at many crises of the later as well as the earlier Church it has almost seemed as if the figure of the Prince of Evil would overshadow that of the Lord of all Good.

Such has been the history of the struggle within Christianity to maintain one of its cardinal tenets. The unity of God has been constantly threatened and has needed to be as constantly defended. It is here that the Unitarian thought of God becomes clear. It begins, continues, and ends with this simple, fundamental, and sufficient proposition, — that God is One and *can* be understood and worshipped as One. The Unitarian is not without sympathy with all the devices for making God intelligible that we have here been considering. He feels the charm of polytheism and the logic of dualism. He is quite ready to believe that there have been times and peoples that could have had no other ways of bringing the divine ideal within reach of their human powers. What most impresses him, however, is that in those very times and among those very peoples the best minds

were able to rise above the popular forms to the essential unity that gave them life. Even more than this: he thinks he can see, even in the feeling of the popular heart, the same true instinct pointing to unity as the explanation of diversity. What Unitarians dread for themselves and for others is that insistence on multiplicity should divert their thought and their allegiance from the one central idea of unity which is to them the source of the harmony of all things. As Christians they believe that it was the mission of Jesus to declare precisely this unity and to make it clear to men as the one sufficient explanation of the law that binds them to each other and to the universe. They follow, with as much patience as may be, the familiar arguments to show that the divine nature cannot be comprehended under any other form than that which the Church has sanctioned in its creeds, and they remain unconvinced. These forms seem to them the clever inventions of theologians, founded in some very obvious and very powerful human instincts, but not touching the root of the matter. Back of all these forms they find ever the plain, simple, and sufficient fact of final and necessary unity. Least of all can Unitarians have any part or lot in the process by which the nobility of the human Jesus is confused with the abstract and theologic Christ. As in the chapter about Human Nature we were led into a discussion of the

divine, so here, if we were to begin the consideration of the divine in Jesus, we should be forced to repeat what we have already said about his essential humanity. Enough here to say that the Unitarian emphasis on the manhood of Jesus only throws into stronger relief the unclouded purity of the divine idea of unity.

Unity is the first fact of the divine nature as to which the Unitarian is sure beyond the possibility of doubt. The second is that the God he worships is not himself. He can conceive of God only as being outside the thinking mind of man, the "something not ourselves" that sums up to us all our highest ideas of what is needed to hold the universe in order and to make clear to us our true place in that ordered universe. In other words, the God of the Unitarian is a transcendent God, a reality, and not a fiction of the human mind. But the moment he has made this clear to himself, there comes another thought equally clear and equally insistent, namely, that this same God, outside ourselves and outside the universe, is at the same time within us and within the universe. This double aspect of deity is possible only through the earlier conviction that God is spirit. If we allow ourselves ever so slight a wavering on this point; if we indulge for a moment in the tempting illusion that God is to be described in material terms, as form, substance, essence, or

by whatever other still less substantial image we will, then we must place him somewhere, either wholly outside ourselves or wholly within ourselves. Either of these alternatives excludes the other. If, however, we can rise to this first primary definition of Jesus, that God is spirit, then we can satisfy both our needs at once; we can think of God as transcendent and at the same time as immanent. All the imagery of all the prophets is not too grand to picture his supreme and unrivalled excellence, but we feel no less poignantly the still, small voice that reveals him to our inmost heart.

This is the firm ground on which the Unitarian rests all his further thought of God, the basis of unity and of transcendent immanence. Beyond this he must frankly confess that thought is so dependent upon language and language is so completely a thing of human habit, that it is impossible to get beyond the limitations of human ideas. The only thing we can do is to free ourselves as far as we can from every temptation to imagine that the human forms in which we must clothe our thought are really adequate expressions of the divine. Unitarians can accept fully the traditional summary of the divine nature under the terms of power, wisdom, and love. They do this because they have no command of language that can carry them beyond these categories. They follow with entire understanding the course of reasoning

by which theologians of many generations have shown the completeness of this threefold view of the divine nature. It is enough for them also. They worship the spirit of power informed by wisdom and restrained by love; the spirit of wisdom moved by power and guided by love; the spirit of love made active by power and enlightened by wisdom. It is a helpful and a convenient summarizing of their thought, but they are aware that it is not a definition.

Above all, Unitarians like to think of God under the endearing name of Father. It expresses to them more fully than any other word could do that freedom of access which is to them the most precious thing in their relation to God. It makes concrete to them all that we have been saying about unity. As human fatherhood admits of no division in love or responsibility, so the figure of the divine fatherhood removes God at once from any possible rivalry. It sums up all that we have said about worship, for, as we have no earthly relation so free and direct as that of parent and child, so no figure of words could express more fully all that the Unitarian feels about his right to address himself freely and directly to the Power making for righteousness, that is also infinitely wise and infinitely good. It represents his protest against the claims of all priesthoods and sacraments, orders and institutions, to come in as

licensed agents of a being to whom he is nearer than to all these.

These are some of the ways in which Unitarians seek to make the idea of God clearer and more present to their thought and their feeling. None of them is an original way. All these figures have been used over again in the long record of the Christian Apology. What distinguishes Unitarian thought on this subject from that of the traditional theology is the consistency with which it clings to this particular circle of ideas and refuses to confuse them with others that do not seem to belong with them. Its criticism of the prevailing creeds is that they have allowed the emphasis to be transferred from the essential to the secondary aspects of Christian speculation. It dwells upon the idea of unity because the Christian tradition seems to have sacrificed that essential of a really comprehensible universe to a desire to crystallize certain aspects of deity into actual personalities.

In like manner Unitarians are accustomed to use the word "Creator." In so doing they do not commit themselves to any theory, theological or scientific, as to the origin of the visible universe or of man as a part of it. Certainly, all their habits of thought point them away from the notion of a sudden creation as expressed in the sacred books of the Hebrews and of many other peoples.

That seems to them only a childish fable born of the instinct for the concrete and the dramatic that is one of the most obvious marks of childhood, whether it be the childhood of the individual or of the race. These same habits of thought make them instinctively sympathize with that other notion of the origin of things, to which we give the name of "evolution." Such an idea seems to them consistent with the sense of law that governs them in so many other conclusions. Yet there would probably be found among Unitarians as many shades of opinion about the details of evolution as among thinking men in general. Their thought of God as Creator does not depend upon any fixed view of the process by which creation was performed. It may, so far as this is concerned, have been a short process or a long one. All the Unitarian means is that, as he tries to give account to himself of what God means to him, he finds it impossible not to think of him as the final Source from which all being flows. He cares little under what form this idea is presented. He reads the history of the long struggle in the earliest centuries of Christianity to produce an idea of God that should be free of this element of creatorship; how so many of the keenest minds were unable to admit it into their definition at all and declared that only by a degradation of the divine ideal could God be conceived of as coming

into direct contact with matter in the process of creation. He follows these men in their further argument: that the actual creative work must have been done by another and lesser being, acting as the obedient, though unconscious, servant of the true and absolute God. And then he listens to the triumphant reply of Tertullian: that even though this were the case, this lesser deity, precisely because he was the creative spirit, would be the deity whom men must love and worship, and he finds his sympathy going out to this warmly human conviction rather than to the faultless logic of the "men who knew." It is not so much that God is the Creator as that the Creator is God. Humanity is so made that it *will* worship the being who gave it the gift of life and made the universe in which it has its part. The sense of dependence is an element of the religious instinct, and it is precisely this sense of dependence that is expressed in the word "Creator."

See how close the connection of ideas here is. The same thinkers who were trying to teach the doctrine of a non-creating God were the very ones who were most deeply impressed with the idea of the reality of evil and of its expression in the world of matter. Matter to them lay over against spirit, so completely severed from it that it could be explained only on the supposition of a different creator. Man, being hopelessly involved in a

material form, must also be the work of this lesser and imperfect being. How foreign all this world of thought is to the sphere of ideas in which the Unitarian moves! To him there is no such opposition of spirit and matter. For him "the whole round earth is every way bound by gold chains about the feet of God." The law of harmony he accepts includes within its working the mind of man and the order of the universe in which he lives. There is no room in his scheme of things for any antagonism that could draw a line between God and his work. He can think of all creation as one thing in many parts and these parts all necessary to its complete and orderly working. He therefore confesses himself gladly in the following of those who in that far off, critical period of the Church's life saved it, once for all, from the deadly error of a philosophic dualism that would have left mankind floating in the dreary waste of an orphaned universe.

Finally, the Unitarian adds to all these other aspects of Deity the notion of an unchanging Law. The qualities we have just been considering carry with them each the implication of a Will. Power, wisdom, love, the creative activity, — these all suggest the necessity of a will to direct their action. Power without the will to exercise it, wisdom without the will to direct it, love without the will to apply it, creative activity without

the will to set it in motion, — these are such unthinkable ideas that men have gone all lengths in translating the divine activity into terms of human will. In so doing they have, generally with a certain consciousness, rejected the idea of law as necessarily limiting the freedom of action of the divine. A God of law has seemed to suggest the very opposite of a God capable of willing to do or not to do what pleased him. The Unitarian escapes this difficulty because to him there is no essential antagonism in these two ideas of will and law. Within the limits of human experience, indeed, such an antagonism is obvious. It is true that to us, in the affairs of our daily lives, law implies the restraint of our wills, and freedom of the will suggests escape from law. The very definition of will, we say, is the freedom to do or not to do what at the moment seems good to us, without restraint from any outward compulsion.

And yet, even within these narrow limits of our own human observation, we discern the possibility of a partial reconciliation between these opposites. As we have already noted, the highest human understanding of freedom of the will is freedom to adjust it to what we conceive to be the divine will. And how could we make this adjustment if the divine will itself were to be thought of as something fitful, whimsical, transient, affected by the passions which disturb our own. It is precisely

because of this disturbance of our own passions that we seek outside ourselves for something steady and permanent to counteract them. The name for the steady and the permanent is Law. We do our best within our human limits to define the law, but we are always conscious that we have not reached a satisfactory definition. Beyond all human striving there is, we feel, another and a higher law combining all those perfections we vainly seek to embody in our earthly systems. That highest law the Unitarian does not fear to call the Will of God. He is not afraid of the charge that he is limiting God by this thought of his will as law. If he should for a moment pretend to understand that law, then indeed he would expose himself to this charge. For no law that he could understand would be worthy of comparison with the divine will. It is because he thinks of the divine law as beyond human knowledge that he can think of it also as the perfect expression of the divine will. In the effort to make his will correspond to the divine law as far as he can see into it, he feels himself to be adjusting his will to the will of God.

Or, to put it in this way: the highest idea of earthly law would be such a law as should express the highest impulses of the human will. If our law could provide for the best development of individual power and individual character, while at the same time securing the widest

exercise of all the social virtues, love, charity, fairness, help, self-sacrifice, generosity, and by whatever other name we may call the best there is in us, then we should say: we have a perfect law. In fact, it would be so perfect that it would not appear as law at all. It would seem to be only the natural action of the perfected human wills of men perfectly adjusted to the highest human ideals. We should most perfectly obey the law when we most completely followed our own will. Now something like this is what the Unitarian means when he calls the divine law the perfect expression of the divine will. His thought of God includes a will which is so balanced that there is no name for it but law and a law so perfect in its beneficence that there is no name for it but will. What men are always striving for and never attaining, that is precisely the imperfect suggestion of what the divine must be. The moment we pass out of the region of our own limitations into the atmosphere of pure faith, all seeming contradiction between the notions of will and law disappears, and we see that these are but two aspects of the one divine ideal.

The thought of God to the Unitarian is thus the sum of his highest conceptions of the Being that is at the centre and heart of all things seen and felt under the varied aspects of unity, power, wisdom, love, and law.

Though he comes slowly to his formulations, thinking his way along from the starting-point of his own human nature, through the lesser problems of the Christian tradition, which are also the problems of all religion, and only in the light of these more tangible results arrives at last to a certain clearness as to the divine, still this divine ideal is none the less the central and informing spirit of what we may now venture to call for the first time the Unitarian Theology. As all our thought has been leading us up to this final summary of Christian speculation on the highest things, so we might now reverse the process and show how the Unitarian's thought of Man and his fate, of Scripture, the Church, Worship, the person of Jesus, and the limits of the Supernatural are all to be interpreted in the light of his conception of the divine nature. That reverse process, however, we leave to the patient reader, who shall have followed our thought thus far. If he can pursue it with ease and clearness, the purpose of this little book will be answered. If not, that will be the sufficient proof that it has failed of its desired object.

Printed in the United States of America.

BY THE LATE

CHARLES CARROLL EVERETT

Bussey Professor of Theology and Dean of the Faculty of Divinity, Harvard University

Theism and the Christian Faith

Edited by Edward Hale, from students' notes

Cloth, xviii + 492 pages, $2.50 postpaid $2.75

This volume gives the substance of Dr. Everett's main course on Theology, including theism and the doctrines of Christianity. His line of thought develops the implications of the three ideas of the reason, — truth, goodness, and beauty, — and so proceeds to the study of the problems of theology and of the position of Christianity among religions.

The recovery of the lectures by Mr. Hale's skilful use of several sets of students' notes (in part ste ographic) has been performed with more than ordinary success, and Dr. Everett's students will recognize the living form and manner of his discourse.

The volume is published as Supplementary Volume No. 1, of the *Harvard Theological Review*, and it is for that reason possible to offer it at the price of $2.50.

"A book which . . . no thoughtful minister can well afford to leave out of his library, unless he can borrow it. . . . The calm, impartial discussion of great themes in these pages." — *The Auburn Seminary Record.*

"This book again brings to one's notice Professor Everett's almost unrivalled faculty of illustration. . . . Perhaps no book dealing with the themes of which this book treats was ever before published so abounding in a wealth of aptly chosen illustrations. . . . To the preacher who is dealing with life at first hand, and who wants ideas that are immediately applicable to the needs of human souls surrounding him, this book is of the highest value. . . . Few books on homiletics are half as useful to the man who has a weekly sermon to produce, for here are practically all the themes on which the preacher needs to speak set forth in outlines with convincing power." — *The Christian Register.*

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York

DUE DATE

APR 04 1996

MAR 17 1998

DEC 02 2002

NOV 27 2002

Printed
in USA

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
0046255419

938.7
Em36

07314205
938.7
EM36 C1
UNITARIAN THOUGHT

MAY 11 1955